RADIO AND TELEVISION NEWS:
THE ROLES OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE BROADCASTERS, AND SOME OTHER CRITICAL ISSUES

A report on the history,
current state and future prospects of radio and television news
for the Task Force on Broadcasting Policy.

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FINAL REPORT

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PART I

INTRODUCTION

Television and Canadian Society

Only an ageing and dwindling minority of Canadians over 50 years of age can clearly remember what it was like to live in a society without television. Most Canadians who are now under 30 years of age became aware of television in their early childhood, long before they learned how to read. They grew up in a society where television influenced, to a greater and greater extent, their view of the world and their country, and even their opinion of themselves.

Starting with a few sets tuned in the late 1940s to U.S. stations in communities close to the border, television has penetrated in the past 35 years into almost every Canadian home and into almost every nook and cranny of our collective consciousness. It is the shared experience that unites the largest number of Canadians in both our major language groups. No other instrument of cultural expression is as powerful, both as a means of describing ourselves to the world and to one another, and of exposing us intimately to new and often alien influences. It has changed our lives in ways that we are only beginning to understand.

Television is so pervasive that it is difficult for us to remember how new it is, as a tool of human communication. We are in the very early stages of the development of television and other forms of electronic communication.

The infancy of television has been marked, in Canada and elsewhere, by extraordinary vitality. While it took centuries for the majority of mankind to benefit from the development of print, television "literacy" was the birthright of every human being who could see and hear. The appetite for the new technology seemed almost insatiable. This was particularly true in Canada where communications had always played a vital role in enabling the country to function politically and economically, and where national and personal wealth enabled us to create the means of distributing, producing, and receiving television programs almost as soon as the first signals started to reach us from the United States.

Television is now the most pervasive modern technology in our society. Homes that lack such basic "necessities" as indoor plumbing, washing machines, and automobiles almost always possess a television set and its humble predecessor in electronic communication, a radio. By 1985, 98 per cent of Canadian households had television sets, and 89 per cent had colour television. Almost every man, woman and child possessed an AM radio in some form; 93 per cent of our households had FM radio.[1]

These receivers are served by 131 television stations and 689 radio stations. In addition, proximity to the U.S. border and cable systems bring Canadians within reach of 99 U.S. stations. Cable systems penetrate 62 per cent of Canadian households.

Satellites now bring these Canadian and American stations to an increasing number of cable systems in small and remote communities. Many isolated households already possess dish antennas capable of receiving television and radio programs directly from satellites. There are an estimated 100,000 dish receivers in Canada at this time and the number will increase as technology and marketing services improve.[2]

Canadians watch an average of 22.9 hours of television weekly. On an average night, at any given time between 7 p.m. and 11 p.m., about one-third of our population is watching television.[3]

Television and News

In the past 35 years, television has become the most important and influential medium of news and information for most Canadians. It has had a truly revolutionary affect on the way Canadians receive news and information and perceive reality. It has drastically altered the structure of the industries, both public and private, that collect, process, and distribute news and information as well as the careers of the journalists and technicians who work for them.

Surveys in the past two decades, in Canada and the United States, have consistently shown that a majority of North Americans favor television as their primary source of news and information, and regard it as the most credible source. In the United States, the proportion of Americans who regard television as their most important source of news rose from 58 per cent in 1964 to 67 per cent in 1978, with newspapers declining during the same period from 56 per cent to 49 per cent, and radio from 26 per cent to 20 per cent. Almost from the beginning, television has been regarded as the most believable news medium in the United States, outranking newspapers by a margin of almost two-to-one.[4]

In 1981, the Royal Commission on Newspapers confirmed earlier Canadian studies when it reported that "television edges out daily newspapers as the preferred source of news by a slight margin" and "more than half of Canadians believe that television will become even more important in this sector."[5] A majority of Canadians who were surveyed by the Royal Commission responded that television is the news medium that is most influential (67 per cent), the most essential to Canada (52 per cent), the most fair and unbiased (53 per cent), the most believable (54 per cent), and the medium that keeps them most up-to-date (52 per cent).

Newspapers retained their primacy only in the field of local news. While respondents to the Royal Commission favoured television for information about international, national, and even provincial news, only 18 per cent said that television was "best" for keeping them informed about happenings in their own communities.

The influence of television is particularly strong among those who are younger and less educated. The proportion of Canadians who favor newspapers tends to be larger among those who have the highest education, the highest incomes, and who are between the ages of 25 and 54.[6]

While no one seriously disputes the importance of television as a news medium and as a shaper of our society, policy makers have been slow to recognize this. In an earlier era, radio news suffered from the same neglect. As a result, Canada has often missed opportunities to encourage the development of these new journalistic media and to exploit them fully in the national interest. That Canada shares this defect with most other developed countries, and that it today possesses many television and radio news services of high calibre, is no reason for complacency.

In the golden age of print, newspapers did not suffer from the same neglect. Politicians recognized the essential role of newspapers and formulated their policies to encourage publication and distribution. Special postal rates for newspapers have existed since 1867 when the first Dominion Parliament established

the Canadian Post Office.[7] As the Royal Commission on Newspapers stated, the government at that time "was anxious to encourage the dissemination of news to all parts of the new federation - for purposes of national development, for education purposes, and for the promotion of democractic ideals." The postal subsidy to Canadian newspapers amounted to more than $27.5 million in 1980.[8] Newspapers and magazines have always been exempt from sales tax on their product and, since 1927, from tax on the manufactured goods which go into their production. The Royal Commission estimated conservatively that the value of this "indirect subsidy" to the newspaper industry would be about $70 million annually.[9]

This tradition was reflected in the creation of the Royal Commission itself in 1980 following a number of newspaper closings and consolidations of newspaper properties. The Royal Commission was created not to examine the economic effects of these closings but how they might affect "fulfillment of the newspaper industry's responsibilities to the public."[10] The government's concern was with the flow of print news and information reaching the public and any consequences that a disturbance in that flow might have for the "political, economic, social and intellectual vitality and cohesion of the nation as a whole."

Despite the many other services that newspapers provide, news has always been regarded as their primary role and public policies have been shaped to reflect and encourage this. Electronic news media have not benefitted from the same official consideration.

Broadcasting History: Entertainment and News

In its earliest days, radio was seen primarily as a means of entertainment. It took years for early broadcasters to recognize its importance as a news medium. Only in its final decades, in the period just before the advent of television, did radio come into its own as an important news medium.

The same process seems to be occurring in television. The first television sets were purchased because Canadians wanted to see movies, variety programs, comedies and quiz shows. In retrospect, television operators in North America, both public and private, were remarkably slow to appreciate the awesome impact of television as a news medium.

Today, news and information production is a major part of most television operations and, in both Canada and the United States, an increasingly important source of commercial revenue. As other sources of entertainment become available on television screens - almost one-third of Canadian households already have VCRs and about seven per cent have Pay-TV[11] - there are indications that news and information programs will become even more important to television stations and networks as a means of retaining audiences and advertising revenues.

Electronic News: A History of Official Neglect

In the long annals of Royal Commissions and Task Forces investigating Canadian broadcasting and other cultural industries, electronic news media account for a remarkably small number of pages. References to radio and television news tend to be brief, uninformed, and sometimes patronizing. This is perhaps not surprising in a generation oriented toward print, but this neglect has had unfortunate effects on policies governing electronic news media. The results of this are evident today.

Although there were 68 radio broadcasting stations and 400,000 receiving sets in operation in Canada by 1928, the first radio reporting of federal election results occurred in 1925, and one of the first extensive systems of network information programming began in 1928,[12] the report of the Aird Commission in 1929 which led to the establishment of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, contained no specific mention of news broadcasting.

The Massey Report of 1951 contributed little to the understanding of radio news as an important influence. It noted rather blandly that there was "a widespread appreciation of news broadcasts and reviews" among Canadians but that there were also "many requests for more information on public and international affairs."[13] Private radio was praised for its local news and information. The commissioners were told in Charlottetown that "private stations contribute at the local level in a way that the CBC can never hope to do" because CBC staff were felt to be remote from local concerns.[14]

The Massey Commission's almost casual approach to radio news was surprising in view of its own identification of news as the fourth largest category of radio programing at that time, behind popular music, drama, and serious music.[15] The Commission failed to foresee that the question of cross-ownership of newspapers and radio stations would become more significant in future. It noted merely that 41 radio stations at the time were owned wholly or in part by newspapers and that "we have had no evidence of any abuse of power as a result."[16] Instead, the commissioners concerned themselves with a technological development that turned out to be a dead-end: the development of fascimile broadcasting to transmit the newspaper by radio to a home printer.

Although 10 per cent of households in the U.S. then had television sets, Canada was just preparing to enter the television age. The Massey Commission proposed that the CBC should control all television stations in Canada "in order to avoid excessive commercialism and to encourage Canadian content and the use of Canadian talent."[17]

Although the CBC had established television news operations in almost all regions by the time the "Fowler Report" was published in 1957, the Report contained little specific mention of news broadcasting. The Report noted that television already attracted more people than radio during the evening hours but stated that Canadians generally seemed to feel that radio outperformed television as a news medium.[18] Information

programming of all types already accounted for 26.1 per cent of television time, almost exactly the amount devoted to that type of programming on radio.[19]

The second Report of the Committee on Broadcasting 1965 again paid relatively little attention to news programming as such. It reported the development of an all-news radio station in the United States as something of an oddity, without immediate relevance to Canadian broadcasting.

The Special Senate Committee on Mass Media reported in 1970 that a majority of Canadians found television the most believable and important medium for international and national news, and that radio ranked closely with newspapers as a source of local news. According to the Committee, a majority of Canadians thought that news coverage by all media had improved in the preceding five years.[20]

In a special section on electronic news[21], the Committee headed by Senator Keith Davey reported that the CTV television network devoted a little more than four per cent of its schedule to news. While the CBC broadcast more news, the total time involved was "not an impressive portion of its schedule." Most local TV stations produced one or two news round-ups daily.

The Davey Report noted that most broadcasters relied on Broadcast News, the electronic news division of The Canadian Press, the national news co-operative, for hourly summaries of regional, national and international news. It welcomed the

development of smaller news services by groups of commercial stations because they added diversity and an element of competition.

CTV had fewer editorial and technical resources than the CBC, the Report stated, but both English-language national television networks were mounting "credible news broadcasts." Their reliance on film footage from U.S. networks for much of their foreign coverage was noted.

The Committee suggested that both networks should be careful that "the news function is not sacrificed to something that may be more profitable but less in the public interest." It urged both networks to improve their news services and to rank news as equal to entertainment in importance, although it appeared that broadcasters were reluctant to do this.

The 1976 report of the Royal Commission on Violence in the Communications Industry (LaMarsh Report) dealt primarily with the high incidence of violence on television news and did not study news quality in depth.

The most recent comprehensive survey of Canadian culture (The Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee - 1982) proposed that the CBC should continue to produce television news but should "phase out local programming as soon as alternative local broadcasting facilities are in place."[22] The Report also urged the CBC to "re-dedicate itself to providing regional programming," leaving somewhat unclear the precise role that local television news would play in a revamped CBC.

More than 50 years after the Aird Commission ignored the beginnings of what we today would call 'information programming' and 35 years after the introduction of television in Canada, the Applebert Report conceded that "it is no exaggeration to say that broadcasting continually colors and even shapes the way we see the world around us."[23]

"Through the broadcast media," the Report stated, "we...obtain news, information and commentary that influence our attitudes to many issues of the day - social, political, scientific and cultural."[24]

The Task Force and Electronic News

The current review of broadcasting, rather than discovering the role of electronic news media as primary channels of news and information, can begin from this accepted premise to explore its implications both for public policy and for the corporate strategies of public and private broadcasters.

Consideration of electronic news, particularly on television, not as simply an adjunct to television's entertainment role but as an essential aspect of a free and diversified press in our democratic society is one of those simple principles that have many radical applications. Only if it is accepted and implemented will electronic journalism begin to realize its potential as a force for enlightenment and progress in our society.

The current review comes at a turning-point in the history of Canadian broadcasting. Because of developments in Canada, in particular the maturing of commercial television systems, and outside influences, particularly from the United States, the basic principles and structures of Canadian broadcasting are being questioned. Although this debate is not new, there is now a widespread expectation that some of the questions will be answered in a way that decisively will influence Canadian broadcasting at least for the balance of this century.

For the first time, the role of electronic news operations in public and private broadcasting is a pivotal aspect of this debate. It is hardly too much to say that the future of electronic news, particularly on television, will be the future of Canadian broadcasting, and this may be particularly true for public broadcasting.

The various movements for reform of Canadian broadcasting are marching under twin banners: Deregulation and Privatization. Although both trends are further advanced in the United States, they express themes that arise naturally from the Canadian experience.

The explosion of bureaucracy in all developed countries since the Second World War has created a healthy critical reaction. In Canadian broadcasting, this has led to questions about the objectives and methods of state control over regulated sector of business and cultural activity. The role of the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission is

being scrutinized more intensely than at any time since its creation on April 1, 1968.

Related to this trend in public opinion and government policy is a reaction against massive state involvement in certain types of enterprises. This trend is especially critical in Canada which has a stronger tradition of state involvement in many areas of activity than has the United States, particularly true in broadcasting where the large presence of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation by itself makes the Canadian system distinctive from the American, in contrast to print journalism where free-enterprise Canadian newspapers operate in a North American context and closely resemble newspapers in the United States.

In broadcasting, the deregulation-privatization debate focusses on the role of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, in particular its television activities. Among these, the function of the CBC as an important supplier of national and local television news and information is regarded by all parties as a critical element. This is creating a unique opportunity to examine the whole field of electronic news, to see how its different sectors relate to one another, and to suggest ways of improving the reliability, productivity, accountability and perhaps even the creativity of the whole industry.

Advocates of broadcasting deregulation and privatization have a clear idea of the role of news and current affairs within a reformed CBC. The most articulate statement of this position

has been made by Robert Fulford, editor of Saturday Night and one of our most influential critics. According to Fulford,[25] CBC television, designed in the 1950s, was appropriate to an era where Canadian television consisted of nothing but the CBC, but is no longer suitable in an era of cable television, pay TV, and an increase in the number of commercial television broadcasters.

While paying tribute to "pockets of excellence" in CBC programming, in particular such public affairs programs as "the fifth estate" and "The Journal," Fulford claimed that the CBC has increasingly "found itself spending money and air time on useless duplication of material others were now providing...more and more CBC programs were becoming solutions for which there were no problems."

Fulford's first example of this was the broadcasting of sports events by the CBC "though now there were others who could do it just as well or better." His second example was CBC production of local news "though nobody could see any way in which the CBC performed this function better than other stations." He also mentioned the importation of U.S. and British programs by the CBC as examples of "a corporation grown hopelessly confused about its mission."

Fulford's solution reflected the views of the Applebert Report: "The CBC should eliminate obsolete services - sell off the local stations, phase out the sports department, stop buying U.S. shows - and concentrate on what it does best and what needs to be done." Although the CBC would be a smaller, less costly

operation in this new format, Fulford proposed that "it should spend a lot of its money on the news service, and particularly on giving that service an international dimension (CBC news should be not a little better than the commercial equivalent, as it is now, but a great deal better)." Fulford also urged spending on "superior documentaries...science programming...children's programming...filmed drama...opera, ballet, experimental productions." Fulford saw this "rebirth" of the CBC as being preferable to its "slow suffocation."

Although he did not specifically suggest this, the elimination of the CBC's local news operations would seem to be inherent in Fulford's proposal to sell off local CBC stations to private enterprise. He seemed to suggest that CBC television news in future should be national rather than local, with a stronger international dimension.

The most extreme version of this type of proposal has been expounded by the Toronto broadcaster Allan Slaight who headed in 1984-85 a small group of businessmen ostensibly interested in purchasing English-language CBC-TV stations. Slaight expressed the essence of his philosophy when he said, in an interview published in May, 1985, the "we see no need or reason for the taxpayer to spend one dime subsidizing local CBC English stations in markets of reasonable size."[26]

The CBC, as envisaged by Slaight, would be primarily a producer of certain types of Canadian programming.

"What really more than anything else...does something to assist our cultural identity or the awareness of Canadians about other Canadians," said Slaight, "is the news, public affairs and information programming." He also included some drama and other "cultural" broadcasts in his list of productions that would originate in a stripped-down CBC. The CBC would continue to produce The National and The Journal and these, along with other selected programs, might be broadcast by the former CBC stations under arrangement with their new private owners.

According to Slaight, this would save the taxpayer "many millions of dollars at the local station level" without noticeable loss in terms of available programs.

"We'd lose the local news and sports and a couple of talk shows and that's really about it," he said "and there doesn't seem to be any passion by the average Canadian taxpayer to retain that part of the service if there is a substantial cost involved, as there is today."

Most owners of radio and television stations support abolition of the CBC or privatizing it, or at least parts of it. What would remain if this type of proposal was implemented is something that opponents of these schemes have described as "PBS North" - a relatively small state television service, totally subsidized by the taxpayer, and with a limited mandate to produce certain types of programming for an audience that would presumably be smaller than the CBC audience is today.

The reaction to this attack on the CBC has been a counter-proposal that the state television system should be not only sustained but expanded as "one of our few sustaining cultural links."[27] There has been a counter-proposal that an assessment should be levied on the revenues of private broadcasters, as a rental fee for their use of public radio and television frequencies, "to provide the national public broadcasting service, the CBC, with resources it needs to meet its commitment to quality Canadian programs."

The "Friends of Public Broadcasting," identifying themselves in February, 1985, as an ad hoc coalition of 2,000 Canadians, agreed with some critics of the CBC that the state system "should provide the programming that is not available elsewhere." Its first example of this type of programming was "in-depth, probing investigative journalism that really searches things out."

In this struggle for survival, the CBC itself has given news and information programming priority. CBC president Pierre Juneau said that "in its news and current affairs programs, the CBC must aim at the highest level of excellence...a level of excellence that the constraints of the commerical markets make impossible." With adequate funding, he said, the CBC would aim to "consolidate the resources of our information programming so as to provide better coverage of the more remote regions that usually we hear about only when there is some scandal or crisis, to provide better coverage of the provincial

capitals, (and) to provide better coverage of international activity through our own eyes and not those of foreign agencies."[28]

All this enables us to understand that, in the current debate over the future of Canadian broadcasting, news and public affairs has been recognized as a strategic area of primary importance rather than a skirmishing territory on the sidelines of the battlefield.

This is particularly true for television. In the current debate over ownership of the broadcasting system, radio has largely been overlooked. This is unfortunate because, as we shall see later in this report, technological and commercial developments are now changing the structures and broadcasting practices of Canadian radio systems in ways that are creating some concerns about this sector.

But it is television news, and particularly local television news, that has been identified by defenders and critics of the CBC as a key sector in the current struggle for control of Canadian broadcasting. This will be the central theme of this report, although it will also touch on other issues. If the right decisions about television news are made in the near future, they will have a forceful impact not only on the quality of our electronic press but on the future of broadcasting in general.

FOOTNOTES

PART I

INTRODUCTION

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5 Royal Commission on Newspapers, 1981, p.36.

6 Ibid.

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8 Ibid.

9 Royal Commission on Newspapers, p.55.

10 Terms of Reference, Royal Commission on Newspapers, p.259.

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13 Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters & Sciences, 1951 (Massey Report), p.30.

14 Ibid., p.33.

15 Ibid., p.37.

16 Ibid., p.292.

17 Ibid., p.305.

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19 Fowler Report 1957, Vol. II, p.46.

20 Report of the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media (Davey Report), 1970, Vol. III, p.6.

21 Davey Report, "Airing the News", Vol. I, p.210.

22 Applebaum, Louis, Jacques Hebert at al, p.296.

23 p. 269.

24 Ibid.

25 "Conservative Measures", Saturday Night, February, 1985.

26 Media Magazine, May, 1985, p.14.

27 An open letter to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney on public broadcasting, sponsored by Friends of Public Broadcasting, Globe and Mail, December 14, 1985.

28 "CBC: A National Priority". An address by Pierre Juneau, President of the CBC, November 6, 1985, Chamber of Commerce, Sainte-Foy, Quebec, p. 20.

PART II

HISTORY

Radio: Development of Private and Public Sectors

Canadian broadcasting in its earliest days followed as a rule the pattern of private ownership already established in the United States, although the involvement of Canadian railways brought some public money indirectly into the early development of radio broadcasting. It was only after almost two decades of development of radio by commercial interests that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation was formed in 1936 and that Canada began to create its distinctive mixture of public and private investment and activity in broadcasting. The Canadian pattern has since been adopted with variations in many countries including Britain, where Canada in the 1930s found the model, in the British Broadcasting Corporation, for its own public broadcasting system.

Since the 1930s, the co-existence of public and private broadcasters within the same system has been a fundamental element of Canadian broadcasting. This relationship has been marked at various times by collaboration, competition, intense rivalry and a search for distinctive roles and audiences.

Although managing the disparate elements within this mixed system has proved to be an expensive and time-consuming process for politicians, regulators and broadcasters, most Canadians probably would agree that the results have been worth the trouble. The national broadcasting system is one of those things that Canadians tend to be rather smug about, in the belief that it avoids both the commercial excesses of the U.S. system, dominated by commercial broadcasters, and the dangers of political control in systems where the state is the dominant player.

The development of radio and television news in Canada has been shaped by this tension between public and private broadcasters. Competition in the area of news, particularly in television, is at the heart of the current debate about the future of Canadian broadcasting.

Broadcasting History

At this stage, it would be useful to reflect briefly on the history of news and information programming. Unfortunately, this is a field of Canadian history that remains relatively unexplored. Particularly in the private sector, "history" seems to consist primarily of the personal recollections of pioneer broadcasters, occasionally in book form but most often on tape. The small number of broadcasters who have tried to research and document brcadcasting histories have tended to come from the public sector. This has created a version of broadcasting history

which tends to ignore the contributions of early commercial broadcasters and the complex political and economic factors involved in the creation of the CBC.

Curiously enough, there was a singular instance of public investment at the very outset of broadcasting in Canada. It was on December 12, 1901, that Gugliemo Marconi received the first trans-Atlantic radio transmission at Signal Hill overlooking St. John's, Newfoundland. In the following year, with $75,000 in federal money, the Marconi Wireless company opened a permanent installation at Glace Bay, Nova Scotia.

The Marconi Company opened station XWA in Montreal in 1918. Later given the call letters CFCF, it remains on the air today as America's oldest radio station.

By 1922, there were 39 stations broadcasting in Canada. The number had increased to 68 by 1928 when there were 400,000 receiving sets in operation.[1] These early stations were powered by batteries and could only stay on the air an average of six hours and 15 minutes before running out of power. Radio transmitters were crude and unreliable; studios were makeshift.

The reliance on batteries meant that some of the early owners were automobile supply companies dealing in this commodity. Newspapers and religious groups also opened stations. In all cases, stations were opened or acquired not because of their profitability (there were few if any commercials on these early stations) but for other reasons - political, economic, and sometimes commercial. The most famous Canadian example of this

indirect motivation was Roy Thomson's ownership of radio stations in northern Ontario in order to create markets for the radio receivers that were his main business at the outset.[2]

The first stations carried no news broadcasts in the modern sense, but there were many "on location" broadcasts that would be classified today as public affairs. Before the creation of radio networks, individual stations were forced to create their own programs from local resources. Radio was sometimes seen as an extension of the town hall meeting for discussion of local issues.

In this initial phase, radio stations came under the jurisdiction of the federal Department of Marine and Fisheries. There was little in the way of coherent policy; issues were dealt with on an ad hoc basis as they arose.

At first, there was an outright ban on commercial sales of radio time. In 1922, broadcasters were forbidden from levying any form of toll for entertainment or information programming. This rule was altered in 1928 to allow stations to carry "indirect advertising" - a kind of institutional advertising in which a sponsor's name or product could be mentioned at the beginning of the program.[3]

By the early 1930s, private radio stations in Canada were carrying such events as the opening of parliament, Christmas day messages by the King, and federal elections. Network programming began among groups of stations on a limited basis during this period. As radio stations showed more interest in news, newspaper owners paid more attention to these potential competitors.

Newspapers and Radio News: The Beginnings of Competition

As early as 1931, the Canadian Daily Newspapers Association supported the nationalization of radio stations because, under a public system, "broadcasting of news could be controlled and advertising probably be cut out entirely."[4] Newspapers not only gave financial and editorial support to the Canadian Radio League, founded in 1930 to promote the concept of public broadcasting, but took steps to restrict broadcasters' access to the news gathered by newspapers. This restriction applied in particular to material distributed by The Canadian Press, the national news co-operative owned by the newspapers. Even stations that were owned by newspapers were usually restricted to carrying a brief excerpt of reports that had already appeared in print.[5]

In an era of minimum state regulation, broadcasters tried to overcome these difficulties in a variety of ingenious ways ranging from simply pirating stories from newspapers to establishing their own corps of correspondents. CFCN in Calgary, for example, boasted of having almost 200 correspondents throughout Alberta as well as access to news from other parts of North America by telegraph and shortwave.[6]

This phase of unregulated free-for-all began to come to an end in 1932 with the establishment of the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission, the forerunner of the Canadian

Broadcasting Commission. This was the beginning of public broadcasting in Canada, inspired by a characteristically Canadian mixture of elitism, fear of American cultural influence and commercial enterprise, admiration of Britain's embryonic system of public broadcasting, and the kind of populist belief in the merits of information, education and culture that animated many progressive movements in Canada in the 193Us.

Under an agreement made with The Canadian Press in 1933, the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission supplied stations with a nightly 1,200-word newscast compiled from CP material. In return, CRBC regulations attempted to prevent stations from using any other news services. Sponsorship of newscasts was forbidden.

Because the CRBC network operated only in the evenings, stations turned to other agencies for daytime coverage. Within a short time, Transradio News, an agency created in the U.S. when Associated Press refused to supply news to stations there, had 25 subscribers in Canada and had started to create a network of Canadian correspondents reporting to its Toronto office. Another U.S. agency, United Press, established an international subsidiary, British United Press, to provide news to Commonwealth broadcasters. Both these new services were more adept at writing news for radio than was the print-oriented Canadian Press.[7]

The Canadian Press response in 1936 was to launch an improved new service for radio. Transmitted over Canadian National wires, the new service consisted of three 1,000-word bulletins transmitted daily at 8 a.m., 12.30 p.m. and 5 p.m. The cost of the service was $10.00 a week.

In 1936, the CRBC was replaced by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. That historic year also included the first instance of spot news reporting by broadcaster Frank Willis from the site of the Moose River mine disaster in Nova Scotia. Willis broadcast five-minute bulletins every half hour for 111 hours. They were broadcast on 58 stations in Canada and 650 in the United States. Willis was the precursor of journalists who pioneered actuality broadcasting during wartime in the following decade.[8]

The CBC and Radio News

The new Canadian Broadcasting Corporation was both broadcaster and regulator. Regulation of news broadcasts was discussed at the first meeting of its Board of Governors in December, 1936.[9] As a result, commercial stations were given permission to carry CBC news bulletins if they were unsponsored, stations had to file copies of arrangements made for local news with the CBC, news from other sources could be used with prior written permission from the CBC and provided it followed CBC regulations, and institutional-style advertising was permitted only at the beginning and end of newscasts.[10]

At first, The Canadian Press agreed to supply its news to the new public broadcasting service without charge, an arrangement that it soon began to question when it became evident that the CBC was aggressively seeking advertising.[11]

The Royal Tour of 1938 was by far the largest news assignment handled by the CBC up to that time. Announcers were recruited across the country and trained to staff 91 actuality broadcasts over a period of six weeks. The manpower, equipment, and expertise demanded by this event strengthened the CBC on the eve of the Second World War, when the role of radio news and propaganda suddenly became of major importance in all developed countries.

The foundations of the CBC's news service, as we know it today, were put in place during the early years of the Second World War. The legendary Dan McArthur was appointed to head CBC news in 1940 and quickly established bureaus in Halifax, Montreal, Winnipeg and Vancouver and a central newsroom in Toronto. Main news bulletins were broadcast four times a day, with national broadcasts at noon and 11 p.m. (later moved to 10 p.m. as an energy saving measure) with regional bulletins in the morning and early evening. These newscasts were available to all Canadian radio stations; many used them to avoid censorship problems, relying on their own newsrooms for local news only.

Canadian news was broadcast overseas through the facilities of the British Broadcasting Corporation. There were 15-minute daily news and 10-minute sports casts written primarily for overseas troups. News also flowed in the other direction as such CBC correspondents as Matthew Halton and Marcel Ouimet provided coverage from the front. Portable recording equipment

developed by the CBC was said to be superior to anything available to correspondents for the BBC or U.S. networks.[12]

A new agreement with The Canadian Press in 1939 gave the CBC access to all the news transmitted by the national co-operative. With the collaboration of Canadian Press, the CBC made attempts to monopolize the distribution of radio news but this was resisted by Transradio, British United Press, and many commercial broadcasters. The Western Association of Broadcasters made plans to create its own news service.

Eventually, Transradio withdrew from the Canadian market, British United Press survived, and a radio news co-operative was launched by the western broadcasters. The Canadian Press responded to competition by creating a subsidiary, Press News Limited, to supply news in radio format. This service, known now as Broadcast News, is the only contemporary survivor of all these early services to operate on a national scale.

The Golden Age of Radio

The immediate post-war period is remembered by many older Canadians as the golden era of Canadian radio. In addition to the news service which had acquired a strong national following during the war, the CBC produced such programs as "Wednesday Night," featuring the best in music, drama, and discussion, and "In Search of Ourselves," which explored social issues in dramatic form. The CBC's International Service, originally intended to provide news to Canadian Forces overseas, began full-scale operations early in 1945.

But the halcyon years of CBC radio were few. In 1949, the Canadian government approved the development of a Canadian television system. CBC television was on the air within a few years in English and French.

Radio News: The Response to Television

At first, CBC radio news and public affairs were protected from budget cuts as radio variety, drama and music were reduced to provide funds for television production. For a time, the bureaucrats within the CBC clung to the belief that radio was "the most important function of the CBC"[13] and that "the senior service" would be unaffected by the development of television.[14] This attitude was reinforced for a time by television's early addiction to entertainment programming and the difficulty of adapting film techniques and equipment to television journalism. Early television newscasts tended to be slow, cumbersome adaptations of radio newscasts, consisting mainly of announcers reading the news in the studio interrupted by short segments of newsreel-type film footage.

Television news began to realize its potential as the 1950s developed with coverage of the Springhill mine disaster, the 1956 winter Olympics in Italy and conflicts in Algeria and Indo-China. In 1957, more than 4.5 million Canadians and up to 70 million Americans watched Queen Elizabeth in Ottawa delivering her first live televised speech to the Commonwealth.[15]

As radio lost its audience and its budgets to television, CBC radio identified news and current affairs as the sectors that held the key to survival. National newscasts were given titles such as "The World at Eight" and "The World at Six" that reflected a more dramatic presentation of the news. "This Country in the Morning" with Peter Gzowski was typical of other attempts by the CBC to popularize current affairs programs without sacrificing journalistic integrity. The same techniques were applied to local markets where early-morning broadcasts were given titles such as "Information Radio," "Good Morning Radio," and "Bonjour Montreal."[16]

This trend continued in the 1970s as CBC radio began phasing out commercials in September, 1974. By June 1, 1975, CBC radio was commercial-free.

These changes enabled CBC radio to maintain a distinctive mission in relation to commercial radio stations. Its special programming attracted a special audience; commercial broadcasters came to regard it only as a minor competitor in terms of audience and no competition at all for commercial revenue.

By the 1980s a kind of equilibrium had been established in radio between the public and private sectors which was only slightly disturbed in 1985 when the CBC underwent another "popularization" in an attempt to lower the age profile of its rather mature (50-plus) audience. The successful adaptation of CBC radio news and current affairs to a new and harsher competitive environment has been seen by some as providing a

model for CBC television in the late 1980s. This will be discussed at greater length later in this report.

The Birth of Television News and Current Affairs: CBC

CBC television, in the early 1960s, following the trend of U.S. networks,[17] began to emphasize current affairs and information programming. Programs such as "Close-Up," "Enquiry," and "Actualités Politiques" critically examined current affairs. In terms of popular appeal, the most spectacular success among these programs was "This Hour Has Seven Days." Launched in 1964 as a weekly public affairs show influenced by the success of the BBC's "That Was The Week That Was," the program increased its audience from 1.6 at the outset million to 3.3 million in May, 1966, when it last appeared.[18]

While the high ratings of "This Hour" were useful to the CBC, in competition since 1961 with the CTV commercial network, the program's volatile personalities and irreverent approach to public affairs, not to mention its questionable journalistic practices, created political problems that the Corporation eventually found intolerable.

The Start of Television News and Current Affairs: CTV

By this time, the CBC was feeling the effects of competition from commercial stations at local and network levels. The first private stations were given licences in eight

Canadian cities in the late 1950s and early 1960s. These soon formed a coalition called the Independent Television Organization to share certain costs.

In 1961, John Bassett, owner of CFTO in Toronto, purchased the broadcast rights to Canadian Football League games. His need to acquire national exposure for these games was the catalyst that brought the new network to life. The eight stations also agreed in 1961 to support a daily national newscast at 10.30 p.m. to be produced at CJOH-TV in Ottawa and shown by stations in Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver.[19]

The current structure of the network, co-operatively owned by its member stations, was adopted in 1965. Since then, the network has supplied programs to its member stations who control the network's budget, with each affiliate providing a percentage of the costs. The difficulty of acquiring operating funds from the member stations has been a constant theme in the development of CTV news and current affairs programming.

At the start of the 1966 television season, CTV news moved to Toronto from CJOH-TV in Ottawa and was produced for the first time by its own staff working in studios and offices leased from CFTO. CTV's weekly public affairs program, "W5," also was launched in 1966 and is today the longest continuously-running program of its type in North America. With Harvey Kirck as its anchorman, CTV News "planned to be as different as possible from our competition - the CBC National News - which we deemed to be dull, stodgy, and long-winded."20

By the late 1960s, despite being handicapped by having fewer local outlets than the CBC and being on the air at midnight in the Maritimes, CTV News had established a considerable presence in Canadian television. In 1976, when anchorman Lloyd Robertson was lured away from the CBC to co-anchor the news with Kirck, the private network began to outrank the CBC in the news ratings in many of Canada's largest cities while the supper-hour news programs of its affiliated stations consistently drew larger audiences than their counterparts on local CBC stations.

The Start of Television News and Current Affairs:

Radio-Canada and TVA

In French-speaking Canada, the public system established and maintained a leading position in news and information programming from its beginnings in 1936.

The first commercial station in Quebec, Télé-Métropole, was launched in 1961. For the first decade, its news operation remained modest even by the standards of commercial television in the other provinces. By 1970, Télé-Métropole was said to have only 10 journalists on staff, all of them located in Montreal.[21]

In 1971, Télé-Métropole (CFTN-TV) became the centre of a commercial network that now includes 10 stations covering 98 per cent of the Quebec population and the francophone regions of northern New Brunswick.

News and information has always been a significant part of the television programming provided by Radio-Canada to audiences in Quebec and francophone communities across Canada. Its information programming in 1980, for example, accounted for 36 per cent of its total programming compared with a comparable figure of 22 per cent for TVA.[22] The ratings of its news and information programs have reflected this specialization. Although TVA attracts larger total audiences than Radio-Canada, and has done this consistently since the 1960s, the nightly "Téléjournal" of Radio-Canada continues to draw more viewers than "Nouvelles TVA."

Television arrived in Quebec on the eve of the great social, economic and political changes of the "quiet revolution." As a result, news and information programming on Quebec television, and on the television service of Radio-Canada in particular, has played a major "political" role. This situation was not duplicated in English-speaking Canada and accounts for many distinctive aspects of the development of television news in Quebec.

Radio and television programs in the 1950s disseminated many of the ideas and popularized many of the personalities instrumental in the political changes that started to sweep Quebec in 1960. During the rise of separatist movements in the early 1960s, the political views of French-language television journalists often created problems for themselves and their news organizations in ways that were foreign to the traditions of

English-speaking journalists. Commercial radio stations were the selected channels of communication of terrorists groups during the "October Crisis" of 1970. The prominence of commercial radio during this period continues to be reflected in its position in the Quebec market of the 1980s.

The Emergence of New Competitors

In January, 1974, the Global Television Network began to provide a third television news service to viewers in Toronto and other Ontario communities. Later in the decade, it created a small news network with other third stations in Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary, and Vancouver.

In 1972, CITY-TV made Toronto the first Canadian city to be served by four Canadian television stations, all providing daily news and other information programs. In 1986, Montreal will become the first French-speaking community to be served by three French-language television stations, all broadcasting daily news.

Radio and Television News: Historical Differences

As this brief historical review indicates, the development of public and private radio and television news and information programming in Canada can be divided into different periods. Radio news began as a commercial enterprise. Commercial radio stations already served much of Canada, and provided considerable amounts of news to their listeners, before the public system began. During and immediately after the Second World War, public

radio became an important source of international, national, and local news for Canadians. When television began to compete with radio for the mass audience, public radio responded, with a fair degree of success, by concentrating its efforts on news and information programming. Public and private news broadcasters in Canada now appear to have reached a certain equilibrium, attracting somewhat different audiences for news and other types of programming.

By contrast, the public system began television service in Canada and had achieved a large following for its news and information programs before the appearance of commercial stations. Since then, a growing number of commercial stations have competed more and more effectively for news audiences with the public system. This has occurred at the network level but even more noticeably at the local level.

The CBC has responded to this, in the first instance, by concentrating its resources on national television news and information programming, on both English and French networks. The success of this venture has led, more recently, to a similar effort being made at the local level in English-speaking Canada.

These developments and their implications for electronic news will be explored later in this report.

FOOTNOTES

PART II

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19 Kirck, Harvey (with Wade Rowland). Nobody Calls Me Mr. Kirck. Don Mills: Collins Publishers, 1985, p.127.

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PART III

STRUCTURE

Ownership Groups and Networks

It would be useful to preface the key sections of this report, which will deal with the state of radio and television news, their prospects, and various options for future development, with a brief review of the main ownership groups in electronic media carrying news and information programming, and the news services or exchanges linking various radio and television stations.

(There is a close but not exact relationship between ownership groups and news services apart from the Canadian Press and its subsidiary, Broadcast News. Radio and television news services tend to exist within ownership groups.)

This brief survey is designed simply to provide an overview of the structure of the industry and some of the relationships within it that affect news and information programming. A more detailed examination of ownership will be found elsewhere in the research papers of the Task Force.[1]

This review will be made under two categories. The first will list ownership groups and their principle holdings. The second will list news services and their clients. The third will list other services relevant to news gathering and distribution.

I - Ownership Groups

1. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

The CBC is the only broadcasting organization that operates both radio and television stations in both official languages from one end of the country to the other. Its English television network consists of 18 CBC-owned stations and 26 privately-owned affiliates which carry CBC network news and some other information programs. The CTV network, by comparison, includes 25 stations but these are owned by the various groups listed below. In addition, there are 10 independent private stations outside the CTV network, and 10 other English-language television stations owned by provincial public television corporations and similar groups. In total, CBC-owned stations and CBC-affiliates account for 44 of Canada's 89 English-language television stations.[2]

The CBC also owns 13 French-language television stations; five additional French-language stations are CBC affiliates for a total of 18 stations carrying French-language network news and some other information programming. The TVA network groups together 10 French-language commercial stations. Radio-Québec, a provincially-owned television system, has 12 stations. There are two other French-language stations not affiliated with any of these groups.

All told, the CBC owns a total of 31 English and French TV stations and there are 31 private affiliated stations.

The CBC's English-language radio network consists of 47 stations (31 mono and 16 stereo) and 10 private affiliated stations. Its French-language radio network is made up of 21 stations (15 mono and six stereo) and seven private affiliated stations. This gives a total of 68 CBC-owned radio stations out of a total of 689 radio stations operating in Canada in 1984.[3]

2. CHUM Ltd.

CHUM Ltd. is owned by Allan F. Waters who has been described as owning more broadcasting stations than any other non-government broadcaster in the world.[4] The stations are:

CFUN, Vancouver
Q Radio, Drumheller, Stettler, and Brooks, Alta.
CFRW and CHIQ-FM, Winnipeg
CHUM and CHUM-FM, Toronto
CFRA and CFMO-FM, Ottawa
CKPT and CKQM-FM, Peterborough
CJCH and C100-FM, Halifax
CJYQ and CKIX-FM, St. John's
CKVR-TV, Barrie
CITY-TV, Toronto
CJCH-TV, Halifax
CJCB-TV, Sydney
CKCW-TV, Moncton
CKLT-TV, St. John and Fredericton

CHUM Ltd. is in the process of acquiring four more stations; CKJM and CHOM-FM, Montreal; and CKWW and CJOM-FM, Windsor - and wishes to expand the coverage of CITY-TV to southwestern Ontario.

3. Slaight Communications Inc.

Slaight Communications Inc., headed by Allan Slaight, purchased Standard Broadcasting Corp. Ltd. in 1985 in one of the largest transactions in Canadian broadcasting history. The other

bidder was Selkirk Communications Limited (see below). The former Standard stations that came under the control of Slaight Communications were:

CJOH-TV (including 8.3 per cent ownership of CTV Network) and CJSB, Ottawa
CKTB and CJQR-FM, St. Catharines
CFRB and CKFM-FM, Toronto
CJAD and CJFM-FM, Montreal
Cable TV Holdings, United States

A condition of the sale was an agreement by Slaight Communications to sell two Toronto radio stations, Q-107 and CFGM, to Western International Communications Ltd.

4. Baton Broadcasting

The property of the Eaton and Bassett families, Baton owns:

CFTO-TV, flagship of the CTV Network (and 8.3 per cent of the network)
CFJO, Ottawa
CFQC-TV and CFQC-FM, Saskatoon

The Saskatoon station is reported to be one of the most profitable in Canada.

5. Maclean-Hunter Ltd.

The largest Canadian magazine publisher and majority owner of the Sun newspapers in Toronto, Edmonton and Calgary Maclean-Hunter also has extensive radio and television holdings:

CFCN, CJAY-FM and CFCN-TV, Calgary
CJAX-FM, Edmonton
CFCO, Chatham
CHNS and CHFX-FM, Halifax
CHYM and CKGL-FM, Kitchener
CKEY, Toronto
CKOY and CKBY-FM, Ottawa

It also owns Maclean-Hunter Cable Television and has publicly stated its interest in acquiring another major-market television station.

6. Moffat Communications Ltd.

Owns:

CKY-TV (and 8.3 per cent of the CTV Network), Winnipeg
CKLG and CFOX-FM, Vancouver
CKXL and CHFM-FM, Calgary
CHED, Edmonton
CHAB, Moose Jaw/Regina
CKY and CITI-FM, Winnipeg
CHAM, Chatham

Also the majority owner of a cable television system in Winnipeg.

7. Selkirk Communications Ltd.

One of the major owners of Selkirk (33 per cent) is Southam Inc. one of the two largest newspaper proprietors in Canada. Its 14 newspapers have an aggregate weekly circulation of 8,693,000 copies. Selkirk Communications owns 14 radio stations and six television stations, cable television systems in Ottawa and Winnipeg, and broadcasting interest in the United States and the United Kingdom. Its broadcast holdings in Canada are:

CHCH-TV, Hamilton
CFAC-TV, Calgary
CFAC-TV, Lethbridge
CHBC-TV, Kelowna (50 per cent)
CHAN-TV, Vancouver (41.03 per cent)
CHEK-TV, Victoria (41.03 per cent)
CJVI, Victoria
CKWX and CKKS-FM, Vancouver
CJIB, Vernon (B.C.)
CJEV, Elkford (B.C.)
CFGP, Grande Prairie (Alta.)
CJCA and CIRK-FM, Edmonton
CFAC, Calgary
CFHC, Canmore/Banff (Alta.)
CJOC and CILA-FM, Lethbridge
CJPR, Blairmore (Alta.)
CFNY-FM, Toronto/Brampton

8. CanWest Communications Ltd.

Parent company of Global Communications Ltd. which owns Global TV, the regional Ontario network, and CKND-TV, Winnipeg. A minority owner of CKVU-TV, Vancouver. CanWest has been awarded licences for two new Saskatchewan television stations, CFRE-TV, Regina, and CFSK-TV, Saskatoon, but final approval has been delayed pending the outcome of appeals to the CRTC and the federal cabinet. Global TV has indicated a desire to supply a third English-language television service to communities now receiving only two English-language services.

9. Armadale Company Ltd.

This Sifton family enterprise, which has two daily newspapers in Saskatchewan, The Saskatoon Star-Phoenix and The Regina Leader-Post, owns five radio stations:

CKOC, Hamilton
CKCK and CKIT-FM, Regina
CKRC and CKWG-FM, Winnipeg

It also has a minority interest in CJFI, Brockville.

10. Irving Group

The parent company of New Brunswick Broadcasting Company Ltd. which owns CHJS-TV, St. John, a CBC affiliate, and seven rebroadcasting stations in New Brunswick. New Brunswick Broadcasting is controlled by K.C. Irving and two of his sons, James and Arthur, who also publish the St. John Evening Times-Globe and Telegraph Journal. A third son, John E. Irving, controls The Fredericton Gleaner and The Moncton Transcript. James and Arthur Irving own CHSJ, St. John. New Brunswick is the only Canadian province without a CBC-owned station.

11. Allarcom

Headed by Dr. Charles Allard, of Edmonton, and the owner of CITV-TV, Edmonton.

12. Western International Communications Ltd.

Owner of:

CKNW and CFNI-FM, Vancouver
CHML and CKDS-FM, Hamilton
CJOB and CKIS-FM, Winnipeg,

all of which are among the top-rated stations in their cities. WIC Ltd. is a majority owner of British Columbia Broadcasting Company which controls BCTV, a CTV affiliate, and 46 per cent of Canadian Satellite Communications Ltd. (Cancom) which provides a package of Canadian and U.S. television services via satellite to remote Canadian communities not previously served by cable TV.

13. Oeuvre de charité J.A. de Sève

The registered owner of Télé-Métropole, named after the founder of Montreal's first French-language commercial station (CFTM-TV). The flagship station for the 10-station TVA Network.

14. Télémédia

One of the two principle private radio networks in Quebec which groups together 36 stations. The flagship station is Montreal's original private French-language station (CKAC) which has the largest audience of any private station in Canada. The majority owner is Philippe de Gaspé Beaubien.

15. Radio-Mutuel

A network of 16 stations, including six French-language stations in Quebec, which was sold by la Corporation Civitas in

1985 to Paul-Emile Beaulne and Normand Beauchamp. CJMS in Montreal is the flagship station of this network.

16. Le Groupe Pathonic

Owner of:

CFCM-TV (Télé-Capitale), Quebec
CFER-TV, Rimouski
CHLT-TV, Sherbrooke
CHEM-TV, Trois-Rivières

17. Quatre-Saisons

Owns the English-language station CFCF-TV in Montreal and holds the licence for Montreal's second commercial French-language television station, now under construction. The majority owner is Jean Pouliot, formerly the majority owner of CFCM-TV (Télé-Capitale) in Quebec.

This ownership list is not exhaustive but merely describes some of the principle groups in Canada. Omitted are many owners of individual radio and television stations and of small regional groupings. A more complete description of French-language ownership groups is contained in a separate report to the Task Force ("La Presse Electronique au Québéc," by Bernard Cleary, Michel Cormier and Roger de la Garde.)

II News Services

1. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

The newsrooms and editorial personnel of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, operating in all regions in English and French, and supported by extensive microwave and satellite

transmission facilities, represent by far the largest news-gathering and distribution service dedicated solely to electronic news. Access to this news service is restricted to CBC network and local news operations. The number of radio and television journalists employed by the CBC is estimated to be 461. The CBC also is the most important source of income for a large number of freelance journalists.

In addition, Radio Canada International operates its own news service broadcasting in a dozen languages including English and French. It has about 24 staff journalists working in its central newsroom in Montreal, seven journalists in its Ottawa bureau, three in Vancouver, and two in Toronto. Radio Canada International also broadcasts news and information programs produced by the CBC for domestic audiences via shortwave to audiences in the United States and overseas.

CBC network news maintains correspondents in every Canadian region and has foreign bureaus in Washington, London, Paris, Moscow, Peking as well as two in New York (one at UN headquarters). The network news operations are centered in Toronto and Montreal, for English and French respectively. News reports coming in from regional bureaus and going out to local stations for incorporation in local newscasts are carried on leased satellite channels, which also carry audio reports for radio and data for hard news copy. In November, 1984, the CBC inaugurated another daily satellite newsfeed, entitled Current Affairs Regional Service (CARS), to move current affairs

programming between local supper-time shows and the network as well as among local shows.

2. CTV

The CTV Network maintains news bureaus in Montreal and Ottawa and has national news reporters in six other Canadian cities as well as foreign bureaus in Washington, London and Peking. The network's Daily News Service (DNS) collects items from its affiliated stations and regional bureaus, and provides material to affiliated stations through the network's leased microwave facilities. The service, operating out of CTV headquarters in downtown Toronto, includes finished items with voice-overs, plus visual items with text material for local preparation of stories.[5]

3. Broadcast News

Broadcast News is the newsprinter and audio service operated by The Canadian Press, the newspaper-owned national news co-operative. Broadcast News Ltd. was established 31 years ago as a co-operative enterprise of commercial broadcasters and newspaper publishers.

Broadcast News employs 110 journalists across the country to provide news, information and programming services in English and French to the industry.

Regional, national and international news from BN's printer service is received by 426 radio stations and 67 television stations. BN's audio service is also the largest and most comprehensive in Canada, supplying 229 radio stations.

In the spring of 1985, BN signed an agreement with Canadian Satellite Communications Inc. (Cancom) for satellite distribution of audio material and hard copy. Under this agreement with Cancom, BN now has 100 receive dishes from coast to coast, and more are being installed. BN uplinks to the satellite are located at Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver.

The satellite system has enabled BN to supply commercial stations with studio-quality news reports and complete newscasts. The improvement in audio quality achieved by using satellite transmission is so significant that radio listeners no longer can tell whether a newscast originates in a local station or in a network studio thousands of miles away, a development that will be explored further in Part IV of this report.

Satellite transmission already has produced more sports and long-form programming. Working with Télé-media and other network groups, BN distributes play-by-play coverage of major league baseball, football and the National Hockey League. A music show from Télé-media "Rockline," is also carried. Télé-media has announced plans to launch in 1986 an overnight network radio show entitled "Coast-to-Coast" with BN providing the news and information segments and satellite distribution.

BN news is compiled from its own staff in the field, from its radio and television affiliates, and from its parent company, The Canadian Press. Sources of international news include Associated Press, Reuters, Agence Françe-Presse and the ABC Radio Network.

4. Standard Broadcast News

This was until recently the Ottawa-based radio service of Standard Broadcasting Corp. It is now part of Slaight Communications Inc. It carries primarily Canadian news, and also provides an Alberta regional service out of Calgary. Stations subscribing to Standard Broadcast News are:

British Columbia

CFVR, Abbotsford
CFLD, Burns Lake
CHWK, Chilliwack
CKEK, Cranbrook
CFEK, Fernie
CIFJ, Fort St. James
CIFL, Fraser Lake
CKGR, Golden
CFGF, Grand Forks
CHLD, Granisle
CKBV, Hazelton
CKGO, Hope
CHBV, Houston
CFJC and CFFM-FM, Kamloops
CKIQ, Kelowna
CKTK, Kitimat
CHUB, Nanaimo
CKNW and CFMI-FM, New Westminster
CKOO, Osoyoos
CHPQ, Parksville
CKOK and CKOK-FM, Penticton
CJCI, Prince George
CHTK, Prince Rupert
CKCR, Revelstoke
CKXR, Salmon Arm
CFBV, Smithers
CKSP, Summerland
CFTK, Terrace
CJAT, Trail
CJVH, Vanderhoof
CFAX, Victoria

Alberta

CHQR, Calgary
CFRM and CFRN-FM, Edmonton

Saskatchewan

CKCK, Regina
CFQC, Saskatoon

Manitoba
CJOB and CHMM-FM, Winnipeg

Ontario

CHML and CKDS-FM, Hamilton
CKKW and CFCA-FM, Kitchener
CJSB, Ottawa
CFRB and CKFM-FM, Toronto

Nova Scotia

CFDR, Dartmouth

Newfoundland

CKIM, Baie Verte
CHVO, Carbonear
CKVO, Clarenville
CKGA, Gander
CKCM, Grande Falls
CHCM, Marystown
VOCM, St. John's

5. NewsRadio

Toronto-based radio service of Maclean-Hunter Ltd., offering primarily Canadian news.

Legislative Bureaus

Victoria, B.C.
Edmonton, Alta.
Toronto, Ont.
Quebec City, P.Q.
Halifax, N.S.

Stations

British Columbia

CKQR, Castlegar
CKXR, Salmon Arm
CKKS-FM, CJOR, CKWX, Vancouver
CJIB, Vernon
CJVI, Victoria

Alberta

CFAC, Calgary
CFCN and CJAY-FM, Calgary
CJAX-FM, Edmonton
CFGP, Grande Prairie
CJOK and CKYX-FM, Fort McMurray
CHRB, High River

Saskatchewan

CKRM and CFMQ-FM, Regina
CJWW, Saskatoon
CJGX, Yorkton

Manitoba

CFRY, Portage La Prairie

Ontario

CHAY-FM, Barrie
CFJR, Brockville
CFCO, Chatham
CJSS and CFLG-FM, Cornwall
CJOY and CKLA-FM, Guelph
CKWS and CFMK-FM, Kingston
CHYM and CKGL-FM, Kitchener
CFPL and CFPL-FM, London
CKOY and CKBY-FM, Ottawa
CFOS, Owen Sound
CHEX and CFMP-FM, Peterborough
CKCY and CJQM-FM, Sault Ste. Marie
CKPR, Thunder Bay
CFNY-FM, CHIM, CHIN-FM, and CKEY, Toronto

Quebec

CFCF and CFQR, Montreal

Nova Scotia

CJFX, Antigonish
CHNS and CHRX-FM, Halifax
CKEN and CKWM-FM, Kentville
CKEC, New Glasgow
CJCB and CKPE-FM, Sydney
CKCL and CKPE-FM, Truro

Newfoundland

CFCB, Corner Brooke
CFLN, Goose Bay
CFGN, Port aux Basques
CFSX, Stephenville
CFLW, Wabush

6. Selkirk Service

Ottawa-based service of Selkirk Communications Ltd., carrying primarily Canadian news. Selkirk was the first radio bureau established in Ottawa in the 1950s. It has bureaus in provincial legislatures in Victoria, Edmonton and Toronto, and has a reporting staff of about six journalists. They serve only Selkirk stations - 11 radio and two television.

British Columbia

CJWX, Vancouver
CJIB, Vernon
CJVI, Victoria

Alberta

CJPR, Blairmore
CFAC and CFAC-TV, Calgary
CJCA, Edmonton
CFGP, Grande Prairie
CJOC and CFAC-TV, Lethbridge
CHAT, Medicine Hat

Ontario

CFNY-FM, Brampton
CHCH-TV, Hamilton

7. Global TV

Global television in Toronto provides a daily television service via satellite for private "third" television stations in Winnipeg, Calgary, and Vancouver not affiliated with CTV

network. There is no daily incoming feed to Toronto of reports from these stations. Satellite transmission is used for incoming reports on a per-occasion basis.

8. Cancom

Six television stations are distributed by Cancom as part of its service to remote communities. These are:

ATV, Halifax
CITY-TV, Toronto
CHCH-TV, Hamilton
CITV-TV, Edmonton
BCTV, Vancouver
CFTM (Télé-metropole), Montreal

These stations currently use Cancom informally as a means of distributing news items. Items of interest are simply lifted from newscasts for processing and incorporation in local newscasts.

9. CKO

Toronto-based network of all-news radio established to serve its seven stations across Canada but also available to other stations via satellite.

10. Télémedia

Montreal-based Quebec service in French owned by Télé-media Communications Inc. Distributed by satellite to the 36 stations of the Télémedia network:

Ontario

CKMP, Midland
CKAT-FM, CFCH, North Bay
CFOR, Orillia
CFYN, Sault Ste. Marie
CJCS, Stratford
CFTI-FM, CKGB, Timmins
CJCL, Toronto

Quebec

CHAD, Amos
CFVM, Amqui
CJAN, Asbestos
CJAF, Cabano
CFED, Chapis
CJMD, Chibougamau
CJMT, Chicoutimi
CJLP, Disraeli
CHGM, Gaspe
CHEF, Granby
CIMF-FM, CKCH, Hull
CKLR, L'Annonciation
CHGB, La Pocatiere
CKLS, La Sarre
CFLM, La Tuque
CIRB, Lac-Etchemin
CKFL, Lac-Megantic
CKMG, Maniwaki
CKML, Mont-Laurier
CKBM, Montmagny
CITE-FM, CKAC, Montreal
CHNC, New Carlisle
CKTL, Plessisville
CIBC Port-Cartier
CITF-FM, CKCV, Quebec
CFLP, Rimouski
CJFP, Riviere-du-Loup
CHRL, Roberval
CKRN, Rouyn
CHRT, St. Eleuthere
CKRB, St. Georges-de-Beauche
CHAL, St-Pamphile
CKCN, Sept-Iles
CHLT, CITE-FM, CKTS, Sherbrooke
CJSO, Sorel
CKLD, Thetford Mines
CHLN, Trois-Rivieres
CKVD, Val D'Or
CFDA, Victoriaville
CJEM, Edmunston

11. Radio-Mutuel

Montreal-based Quebec service in French, operated by the Radio-Mutual Network of 14 stations:

Bureaus

CJMS and MKMF, Montreal
CJTR, Trois-Rivieres
CJRC, Gatineau

Affiliated Stations

CJGT, Alma
CHVD, Dolbeau
CHLC, Hautrive
CJRC, Hull-Ottawa
CHGA-FM, Maniwaki
CHRM, Matane
CJMS, Montreal
CJRP, Quebec
CJSA, Ste-Agathe
CJMC, Ste-Anne-des-Monts
CJRS et CIMO-FM, Sherbrooke
CJTR, Trois-Rivieres

12. Western Information Network

Vancouver-based radio service for British Columbia stations, primarily regional news. Satellite distribution of news items and complete newscasts. The flagship station is CKNW, owned by Western International Communications Ltd.

British Columbia

CFVR, Abbotsford
CFLD, Burns Lake
CHWK, Chilliwack
CIFL, Fraser Lake
CIFJ, Fort St. James
CKGR, Golden
CKGF, Grand Forks
CHLD, Granisle
CKBV, Hazelton
CKGO, Hope
CHBV, Houston
CFJC and CFFM-FM, Kamloops
CKIQ, Kelowna
CKTK, Kitimat
CHUB, Nanaimo
CFMI and CKNW, New Westminster
CKOO, Oliver-Osoyoos
CKOK and CKOR-FM, Penticton

CJCI, Prince George
CHTK, Prince Rupert
CFBV, Smithers
CKSP, Summerland
CFTK, Terrace
CJAT, Trail
CIVH, Vanderhoof
CKAL, Vernon
CFAX, Victoria

13. Canada News-Wire

Toronto-based distributor of press statements with teleprinters in more than 200 newspapers, radio and television stations, wire services and brokerage houses. Service in both English and French. CNW announced plans in 1985 to distribute by satellite.

14. Telbec Inc.

Montreal-based distributor of press statements with 387 teleprinters across Canada. A bilingual service.

Foreign radio news services available to Canadian stations either directly or via Canadian news services acting as intermediaries include NBC, ABC, CBS, United Stations, Mutual, CNN (Cable Network News), AP Broadcast, and UPI Broadcast.

Foreign television news services available to Canadian stations either directly or via Canadian stations acting as intermediaries include NBC, CBS, ABC, CNN (Cable Network News), ESPN (a U.S. pay-TV sports network) and VisNews (European).

Foreign wire services available to Canadian radio and television stations include UPI (SportsTicker), Dow Jones News Services, Christian Science Monitor, Los Angeles Times/Washington

Post, New York Times, and Agence France-presse. Reuters and AP are available through Broadcast News.

III Related Services

1. Telesat

Telesat is a private commercial company whose ownership is shared by the federal government and Canadian common carriers. It is a monopoly, controlling all traffic to and from Canada's four operational telecommunications satellites and all linkages to foreign satellite operators. All satellite transmissions by Canadian radio and television news operations must be arranged through Telesat at rates set by Telesat and approved by the Canadian Radio, Television and Telecommunications Commission.

2. Electronic News Group Inc.

Created in 1985, Electronic News Group Inc. (EN Group) is an alliance of a majority of the commercial broadcasters in Canada to "encourage exploitation of all types of communications technology so as to (i) reduce distribution and reception costs and (ii) enhance the ability of service providers and clients to maximize market potential."[6]

High Telesat charges were sited by the Group as one of the primary reasons for its existence.

The aim of the EN Group is to provide a "non-exclusive, universal electronic highway...to handle data, audio and video traffic on terms and on priorities dictated by the users themselves." It now shares satellite capacity on Telesat's ANIK

D1 satellite through an arrangement with Barber Greene Satellite Ltd. (Global Television). EN Group has launched several legal challenges to Broadcast News' "monopoly" position as "the only provider of a basic Canadian news service."

FOOTNOTES

PART III

STRUCTURE

[1] Ownership Structure and Behavior in the Canadian Broadcasting System: A Policy Perspective. Stratavision Inc., 1986.

[2] TV and Radio. Figures That Count. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. August, 1985.

[3] TV and Radio: Figures That Count.

[4] Toronto Star, August 20, 1985.

[5] Telephone interview with John T. Coleman, Vice-President, Planning and Development, CTV, with Kathryn Hazel.

[6] Brief to the Task Force on Broadcasting Policy, Electronic News Group Inc., August 31, 1985, p.A-1.

PART IV

RADIO

A Period of Concern

The work of the Task Force on Broadcasting Policy coincides with a period of concern about the future of radio news. A combination of competition from television and a revitalized print sector, particularly magazines, and the recession of the early 1980s, continues to adversely affect the economics of radio broadcasting and to hinder the development of radio news operations in the private sector. In the CBC, by contrast, radio news and information programming plays a stronger role than ever before in CBC radio, and has emerged as the "saviour" of that service during a period when public broadcasting has been under financial restraint and political attack. The recent history of news on CBC radio is relevant to the future of CBC television news.

If the role of electronic news in general has been largely overlooked by Royal Commissions and Task Forces investigating Canada's cultural industries, radio news in particular has been ignored in relation to the ancestral craft of print journalism and the newer, more glamorous and more powerful medium of

television news. But radio journalism remains, in the words of a Toronto radio news director, "a fine form to get information to Canadians, and not just an afterthought."[1]

Radio news operations, however, do tend to be relatively small. The leading "news station" in a typical major Canadian market will employ about a dozen radio journalists, including five or six reporters in the field. Many smaller radio stations will employ one, two or three journalists at low salaries to simply fill newscasts with syndicated material with little or no original reporting. Radio journalism, particularly in the private sector, tends to be parasitical relying on print media and syndicated news services to fill the time required for radio news under the conditions of licence. Despite these handicaps, radio continues to provide an essential basic news and information service for a large segment of the mass audience.

Hard Times for Radio News

The outlook of radio journalists at this time has been colored by recent economic difficulties in the industry and the alarming effects of radio deregulation in the United States. It has been said that "few other events have had the impact on broadcast journalism in the U.S. as (sic) the federal government's deregulation of radio in 1981."[2]

It is estimated that little more than half of the 9,000 radio stations in the United States still carry news, and that news broadcasts now tend to be shorter. The average length of an

AM newscast in the United States in 1983 was five minutes and 15 seconds, 15 second less than the year before. In the same year, the average FM newscast was reduced by 30 seconds to four minutes. Many stations now carry newscasts that last less than two minutes.

A survey of 371 U.S. stations in 1983 showed that the median size of news staffs was 1.3 full-time journalists.[3]

The Deputy Director of Associated Press Broadcast Services was quoted recently as saying that "radio news is becoming an endangered species (in the U.S.)."

"Today there is a great silence in city after city where there's no local news." said James R. Hood. "An entire generation of listeners is growing up today who don't expect to hear news on the radio."[4]

Despite these depressing statistics and assessments, there is a minority view in U.S. journalism that the decline of radio news is temporary and that there already are signs of a renaissance. The all-news radio format has remained popular, with twice as many all-news radio stations (a total of 189) in 1982 as there were in 1980.[5]

A recent survey by the Radio Advertising Bureau in the U.S. showed that 52 per cent of 1,000 adult respondents identified radio as their first morning news source. More than 85 per cent identified local news as a key reason for selecting a station, although it was a less important factor than the station's choice of music and its weather information.

In the United States, salaries of radio journalists rank them with journalists on small daily and weekly newspapers at the low end of the scale for professional journalists. The 1983 median weekly salary for radio news directors in the United States was $275 U.S. or $25 more than the salaries paid by these directors to their best reporters. Even when the differential between U.S. and Canadian currency is taken into account, the salaries appear to be low by Canadian standards.

Canadian Radio: Recovery from the Recession

Recently there have been signs of a recovery by radio broadcasters in Canada from the worst effects of the recent economic recession. In the year ending August 31, 1984, total revenue for 432 private AM and FM radio stations reporting to the Canadian Association of Broadcasters was $558,678,789 compared with $492,106,832 in the year ending August 31, 1983, an increase of 13 per cent. Net profit before taxes for the group was $25,401,642 compared with $16,520,225 in the preceding year, an increase of 53 per cent.[6]

Smaller radio stations continue to experience the heaviest losses. Seventeen of 29 stations with annual revenues of less than $200,000 reported losses in the 1983-84 year. Losses were also reported by 23 of 42 stations with revenues between $300,000 and $400,000 a year. In 1982-83, however, a majority of all stations with revenues of less than $500,000 annually reported losses. The highest number and proportion of stations reporting

losses in 1983-84 was found in Ontario, where 55 of 126 reporting stations experienced losses.

In contrast with the smaller stations, losses were reported by only 16 of 71 radio stations with revenues of $2 million or more in 1983-84.

The average number of employees per radio station in 1984 was 23. Statistics of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters do not provide a breakdown giving the number of news employees but the total cost of news was estimated in 1984 to range from 19 per cent to 34 per cent of total program expenses. As a rule, the larger the station, the higher proportion of revenue devoted to news, according to the industries' own statistics.[7]

The total cost of salaries and benefits for journalists involved in news programming ranged in 1984 from 13 per cent to 25.1 per cent of total program expenses, with the larger stations again tending to spend a larger proportion of their revenues on journalistic talent than the smaller stations.

While the worst effects of the recession appear to have moderated, radio's share of total advertising revenue has declined over the past decade from 20.6 per cent in 1974 to 16.8 per cent in 1984.[8]

Despite this, a survey of 92 radio stations undertaken as part of this study showed that 55.4 per cent of the stations reported an increase in their news/public affairs budgets in the past five years, with 13 per cent reporting a decrease (the rest of the stations either reported no change or failed to answer

this question on the survey). The average increase in the news/public affairs budget over the five-year period, for the 32 stations providing this information, was 27.2 per cent.

Public Radio: Funding and Focus

All these factors have created a mood of uncertainty and apprehension among radio journalists in the private sector. On the public side, the atmosphere is somewhat different. While CBC radio has suffered budget cuts, CBC radio news remains relatively well-funded, in relation to its role, compared with CBC television news or with radio news in the private sector. News and information programming is considered to be an essential part of the CBC's radio service while in the private sector, it is regarded by some station owners as a costly frill provided only because of regulatory requirements.

CBC radio also occupies a less prominent place in Canadian radio than does CBC television in the television industry. There are only 46 CBC-owned and operated AM stations compared with 378 private AM stations. The CBC has 22-owned and operated FM stations compared with 226 private FM stations. There are also 17 private stations affiliated with the CBC.

English-language owned and operated CBC AM stations reach 14 per cent of the audience compared with 75 per cent for private AM stations and their weekly audience share was only seven per cent in 1984, an increase of 0.9 per cent since 1982.[9] CBC-owned and operated FM stations have a weekly reach of five per cent

compared with 52 per cent for private FM stations, and had a weekly audience share of only 1.8 per cent in 1984, an increase of 0.3 per cent since 1982.[10]

French-language CBC-owned and operated AM stations have a weekly audience reach of 11 per cent compared with 61 per cent for private AM stations, and had a weekly audience share of 4.9 per cent in 1984, a decrease of 0.1 per cent since 1982. The weekly reach of French-language CBC-owned and operated FM stations is five per cent compared with 49 per cent for private FM stations, with a weekly audience share of 2.4 per cent in 1984 compared with 1.9 per cent in 1982.

English-language CBC AM and FM stations achieve their biggest share of the weekday audience from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. when news and current affairs programs are being carried on the network. The most popular CBC time, after that, is from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. when local news and current affairs programs are being broadcast. French-language CBC AM and FM stations enjoy their largest audience share from 7 p.m. to 1 a.m. Next in importance, in terms of audience share, are the morning hours up to 9 a.m. when news and information programming dominates the schedule.

The CBC Radio Audience

Although relatively small, the CBC radio audience tends to be distinctive in terms of age, education, and occupation. Forty-two per cent of the audience for CBC English AM is 55 years of age or over; only 29 per cent of the audience of private

English AM stations is in this age group. Thirty-six per cent of the audience for CBC English FM is in the over-55 group; private English FM stations draw only 15 per cent from that group.

The same pattern does not hold true as strongly for CBC French AM, which draws 29 per cent of its audience from the over-55 group compared with 31 per cent in the case of private French AM. CBC French FM mirrors the English-language experience, drawing 35 per cent of its listeners from the over-55 group compared with 11 per cent in the case of private French FM.

The difference in educational background of listeners is even more striking. Twenty-nine per cent of the CBC English AM audience have university degrees compared with only seven per cent for private English AM; 40 per cent of the CBC English FM audience have university degrees compared with 12 per cent for private English FM. Eighteen per cent of the audience for CBC French AM have university degrees compared with four per cent of the private French AM audience; 23 per cent of the CBC French FM audience have university degrees compared with 10 per cent in the case of the private French FM audience.

CBC radio, both English and French, also has a higher proportion of listeners identified as "manager/professional" for both AM and FM services in relation to private stations.

Radio Journalists: CBC and Private

CBC radio on the whole, pays its unionized journalists higher salaries than those received by journalists in the private

sector, where the majority of radio reporters do not belong to labor unions (with the exception of Quebec).[11] CBC journalists as a rule have more time to develop news and current affairs reports. CBC radio devotes more time, attention and money to the recruitment and professional development of its journalists than do radio news organizations in the private sector. As a result, CBC radio journalists tend to be older, better-paid and better-experienced than their counterparts in the private sector.

The survey of Quebec journalism which accompanies this report has described private French-language radio as, with some exceptions, "an adolescent business operated by adolescents." It states that journalists on private French-language stations are usually novices with little experience, recent graduates of community colleges or universities working within news organizations where there is "almost a total absence of proper direction." It is noted in the Quebec report that this is particularly true in the regions outside of the major centres. This critical description would certainly apply to many of the smaller radio stations outside of the major markets in English-speaking Canada.

All-News Radio

A distinctive feature of private English-language radio, as compared with French-language radio, is the existence of an all-news radio network (CKO) with eight stations between Vancouver and Halifax, and news bureaus in all these cities. CKO

estimates that it now has 104 editorial and program personnel. About half of this number are radio journalists. It plans to increase this total to about 113 employees in 1986. Although it continues to lose money, and its future is in some doubt, CKO is an aggressive news organization that intends eventually to try to market its internal news service to other private broadcasters.[12] With all its stations broadcasting on FM, it is benefitting from the trend that is shifting listeners from AM stations to FM.

The Shift to FM

Since 1977, FM radio has increased its share of the Canadian audience from 17 per cent to 40 per cent, with the largest increases in major urban markets. FM now has 54 per cent of the audience in Montreal, 50 per cent in Ottawa, and 47 per cent in Toronto.[13]

Despite federal regulations limiting commercial time available on FM to a fraction of that sold by AM stations, requiring certain levels of spoken word content and demanding programming outside the format selected by FM stations, FM has multiplied while AM has been stagnant. The number of FM stations has grown to 120 from 85 six years ago while only three AM stations have been added in the same period to the 323 that were on the air in 1979.

AM radio now retains less than two-thirds of the audience although it has almost three times as many stations as FM. FM

revenue has grown 468 per cent since 1977, from $25 million to $142 million in 1984. In the same period, AM revenue grew by 69.5 per cent from $246 million to $417 million.

This phenomenal growth pales only in comparison with the growth of FM in the United States, where AM radio has lost 71 per cent of its audience.[14]

Pierre Nadeau, director general of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters, has been quoted as saying that AM radio broadcasters appear to have no response to this development: "We have not developed a master plan of any sort."[15]

This development may affect radio journalism in a number of ways. In most major markets, the leading "news station" is on AM. In addition, because FM stations have a maximum of 150 minutes a day of commercial time compared with 250 minutes for AM, listeners are switching to a technology that offers less potential revenue to broadcasters. These developments, if they continue, almost certainly will start to affect both news audiences and revenues available for radio news operations. The CRTC will have to monitor this closely to ensure that the overall quality of radio news available to listeners is not reduced because of a shift in technology. Because the adoption of this technology varies from one market to another, the CRTC will have to watch news audiences and expenditures of individual stations closely so that the overall quality of radio news is not adversely affected during the period of transition.

The Satellite Revolution

Another technological development which is having a marked affect on radio news is the increasing use of satellites by national and regional radio networks. This development has been made possible by U.S. technology, made available in Canada in 1984, which enables a satellite channel leased for television to carry, in addition to the television signal, up to 20 low-level sub-carriers, each one capable of delivering a radio broadcast to any point in Canada with virtually no deterioration of audio quality. The hardware required for each sub-carrier costs about $1,500, according to Telesat.[16]

This low-cost technology has brought satellite transmission within reach of radio broadcasters, and is rapidly being exploited. In the fall of 1984, Broadcast News moved its audio services to ANIK D1; CKPR/CJSD-FM Thunder Bay became the first station to receive BN Audio via satellite on October 15, 1984. Under an agreement with Canadian Satellite Communications Inc. (Cancom), BN had installed 100 receive dishes by the end of 1985 and had acquired satellite uplinks at Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver. Working with Télémedia and other network groups, BN distributes play-by-play coverage of major league baseball, football and the National Hockey League. Telemedia in 1986 plans to launch an overnight network show with BN providing the news and information segments and satellite distribution.

BN's satellite system replaces its national five-kHz terrestrial network, which connected bureau cities across Canada and their 2.7-kHz regional distribution systems - with four 15-kHz channels on ANIK D1. This satellite-based system offers much wider audio bandwidth and lower background circuit noise, and quadruples the capacity of the BN system.

Before satellite distribution, only radio stations in some major cities had access to BN's five-kHz audio quality service. Now even small stations in remote regions have access to the 15-kHz service.

The four channels are utilized by Broadcast News in the following configuration:

Channel 1: Regularly scheduled newscasts; national news and sports feeds.

Channel 2: Regional news, sports and feature feeds on a time-shared basis with flexibility to meet time zone priorities. Stations in all provinces except Manitoba are served by regional uplinks at Vancouver, Edmonton, Toronto and Halifax. A regional uplink at Winnipeg is scheduled to go into service in 1986.

Channel 3: Expanded news feeds, special events including live coverage of major breaking stories; exclusive features; long-form informational programming and special group news feeds and newscasts.

Channel 4: Long and short-form programming from Canadian and American sources. Stereo music specials and live concerts can be delivered by pairing channels three and four.

Broadcast News also operates a fifth 15-kHz audio channel and a 7.5-kHz audio channel for its French-language service, NTR. These two channels are fed by separate uplink facilities at Montreal. Audio NTR was serving French-language stations in New Brunswick and Ontario by the end of 1985. For the first time, satellite distribution meant that the French-language NTR service was available to any station anywhere in Canada.

BN will also use its satellite system to move data. For the first time, high-speed news wires will be available anywhere in the country rather than being restricted to major cities as in the past. French-language news wires will also be available in all regions.[17]

BN has estimated that the total cost of this switch to satellite transmission is $3 million.

BN's satellite service offers client stations four-minute newscasts every hour on a 24-hour schedule. It is being advertised to station owners as a system that "should save you money, and at the same time, improve and increase service from midnight to 6 a.m. in your time zone."[18]

In the fall of 1985, BN and Télémedia announced "Coast-to-Coast: The Overnight Project" - an overnight network radio show including hourly newscasts and sportsbreaks as well as

music and other forms of information programming. The system is designed to automate the insertion of local station identifications, commercials, promotions and public service announcements by using tone-activated equipment in local stations. This will provide even small local stations with overnight programming "untouched by human hands" at the local level.

Satellite transmission is also used for regional distribution of news. The Western Information Network, for example, originating at CKNW in Vancouver, now uses two ANIK-D satellite channels. One is used for a basic news and information service and the other as a programming and features channel used to transmit "Nightline B.C.," a daily, province-wide network talk and music show, hockey games, and special business, sports, and editorial features.

The news service on satellite includes "Network News" offered hourly from 7 p.m. to midnight, seven a nights a week. On weeknights, a half-hour news, sports and interview show entitled "B.C. Tonight" starts at 10 p.m. The network, which advertises itself as "the most active regional news and sports network in Canada," also provides regional feeds of radio reports produced in CKNW studios from material gathered from member stations of the network in British Columbia, from Standard Broadcast News based in Toronto, and from N.B.C. News based in New York.

Western Information Network serves 15 radio stations and their repeaters in British Columbia.

This type of service offers local radio stations an opportunity to close their local newsrooms overnight for varying lengths of time while continuing to provide their listeners with studio-quality hourly newscasts and other types of network information programming. While the argument is made that this enables local stations to use their news resources more efficiently, it reduces the number of hours at night when local radio audiences can expect to receive up-to-the-minute coverage of local news events. Although journalists may be on call during these periods of automated newscasting, it is obvious that there will be a slower and less comprehensive response to fast-breaking news stories by local radio reporters. Since radio news is an important carrier of local news, this could represent a substantial reduction in local service.

This phenomenon is occurring in every region. In Quebec, there have been reductions in radio news staffs, particularly in local stations affiliated to private networks, which have significantly weakened the quality of radio news. A majority of these regional stations now offer relatively little in the way of local information because of their reliance on network reports and newscasts.[19]

Satellite, Mergers and Radio News

Satellite technology appears to be furthering a centralization of radio news in Canada, at the expense of local coverage, while another form of concentration is occurring at the

ownership level. The most recent example in English-language radio has been the acquisition of Standard Broadcast News by Slaight Communications, mentioned earlier in this report. In Quebec, there is speculation that Power Corporation, which owns daily newspapers in Montreal, Trois-Rivières, Sherbrooke and Granby, will soon take over Télé-metropole which owns Channel 10 in Montreal and the private French-language television network TVA. This tendency to concentration is partly in response to the repeal in May, 1985, of a 1982 order-in-council which restricted the purchase of broadcast holdings by those who owned newspapers in the same market.

This trend was summarized by Barbara Moes, editor of Broadcaster, in an editorial entitled "Power Play" in the October, 1985, issue of her magazine:

"The Desmarais $98 million takeover bid for Télé-metropole poses some interesting questions and points to some new trends in our industry. Recently the CRTC has given licenses to CHUM Ltd. which now extends its empire across Canada with the exception of Saskatchewan. CanWest obtained the license for a third service in Regina and Saskatoon which along with its CKND-TV station in Winnipeg gives it a nice Prairie sweep; Jean Pouliot has won the third license for a TV station in the Montreal market giving him a healthy Montreal portfolio. Meanwhile, Allan Slaight, who was a former partner in Global Communications, has effectively bought Standard Broadcasting outbidding Selkirk Communications in an intriguing takeover battle. Rumour has it that Power Corp. is

backing this particular deal. What we may end up with is less than a handful of people running the media industry in Canada."

The question raised here by Barbara Moes in the broadcasting industry's own trade magazine was put even more forcefully by the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media in 1970 and the Royal Commission on Newspapers in 1981. Both inquiries found that concentration of media ownership reduces diversity and competition within news media and threatens to reduce the high quality of information essential to a healthy democracy.

The combination of large ownership groups, cheaper and more efficient satellite transmission of radio news, and the current trend toward de-regulation threatens the survival of local radio news operations already weakened by competition from television and budget cutbacks during the recent economic recession. These developments will have to be watched closely by the CRTC in the next few years to ensure that this important vehicle of local news and information doesn't deteriorate further. The solution, however, may not lie in a rigid adherence to regulations created in an earlier era in a radically different economic, technological and political context.

New Competitive Forces

Although concentration of ownership and centralization of radio news are causes for concern, it is also true that the growth of electronic media in general in recent decades has increased the number of "big players" in the industry who now

want to change some existing structures. This may produce in future a higher degree of competition between some of these major groups at the network level.

The most recent illustration of this is the formation of Electronic News Group Inc. by an alliance of major television and radio interests to facilitate satellite transmission of material. Corporate media groups supporting the formation of EN in 1985 included such major media interests as Harvard Communications in Saskatchewan, CanWest Broadcasting Ltd. in Manitoba, Global Communications Inc. in Ontario, CFCF Inc., Télé-metropole Inc. and Pathonic Communications Inc. in Quebec, New Brunswick Broadcasting Company Ltd. in New Brunswick, and such national groups as Maclean-Hunter Ltd., Moffat Communications Ltd., Selkirk Communications Ltd. and Standard Broadcasting Corporation Ltd. before its acquisition by Slaight Communications.

One of the EN Groups' first activities was to challenge the "monopoly" of Broadcast News. For many years, radio broadcasters have resented the dominance of newspaper publishers in the direction of The Canadian Press and its broadcast subsidiary, Broadcast News. Although Canadian Press has moved recently to increase the representation of the broadcast industry on its board, many broadcasters still dream of a new service that would be operated by and for electronic news organizations. As various broadcasting groups become larger, and as satellite transmission of radio news becomes cheaper, the possibility of

creating one or more competitive electronic news services attracts more and more attention. Up to now, the scope of Broadcast News has discouraged this kind of initiative.

This issue has been raised before the Task Force by EN Group. It stated in its brief that some of its supporters believed originally "that the company should as a primary goal establish and operate a basic news service as an alternative to the newspaper-dominated Canadian Press.

"It soon became evident," stated EN Group in its brief, "(that) the critical impediment to short-, medium- and long-term industry independence rested on ownership of a simple, flexible and universal communications company to deliver text, audio and video signals and services to Canada's electronic media. The services would include news and information and, if possible, any basic services offered to broadcasters by The Canadian Press through its wholly-owned and profitable subsidiary Broadcast News Ltd."

EN Group told the Task Force that its efforts to create such a system had been thwarted by Broadcast News "as a result of an insistence on the part of BN that all BN group shareholders pay for BN transmissions whether or not they use or need them." EN Group asked the Task Force "to recognize, as a matter of public policy, the dangers inherent in this type of monopoly power." It proposed that organizations providing news services, such as Broadcast News, should be prohibited from engaging in the supply of transmission services. There should be a separation of content and carrier in the provision of news services.

In reply to this, Broadcast News has rejected the EN Group's "strained attempt to portray BN as a common carrier." It stated that BN would realize "no savings whatsoever from the duplicative satellite transmission of its signals by EN Group."[20]

EN Group has taken initial steps to challenge the right of Broadcast News to control access to its news product in this fashion. In the meantime, however, it can be observed that there are some contradictions in this claim by some private broadcasters, who jealously guard copyright of their own broadcast material, that the news content of newspapers and stations affiliated to Canadian Press and Broadcast News should not belong to these proprietors but should be made available to all broadcasters as a public service. Not only is it unlikely, in my opinion, that this approach will be productive in the courts but it seems to me that the members of EN Group themselves might object to some of the implications of a ruling in their favour in this case.

Of more significance, in the long run, is the very existence of EN Group, its discontent with the dominance of Broadcast News as a supplier of electronic news, and the possibility that this could lead to the creation of one or more rival services. This would be a positive development, which could be encouraged by measures that assist broadcasters to participate in satellite technology. EN Group has suggested that this might be done through tax benefits or grants. This approach might be

difficult politically in view of the profitability of large broadcasting enterprises, unless the assistance is related specifically to the transmission of news and information programming which serves a demonstrated public need.

One of the principles animating the EN Group's proposals is that new technologies require new regulatory approaches.

Unlike print journalism, which has a long history and tradition of resistance to regulation by the state, radio journalism has existed from the beginning within an industry that has been the object of increasingly comprehensive and complex regulation by the state. It also exists within an industry that has a significant proportion of public ownership. At this moment in the history of radio news in Canada, the extent of public ownership and the operations of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in the field of radio journalism are not particularly contentious issues. After a period of financial cutbacks, internal re-organization and program reform, CBC radio appears to have found a distinctive role for itself, particularly in news and information programming. The current period can be described, at least in this sector of broadcasting, as one of relatively harmonious co-existence.

Radio News and the CRTC

The same cannot be said for the current state of affairs between radio journalists in the private sector and the regulators working through the Canadian Radio, Television and

Telecommunications Commission to shape the Canadian radio system. There is a widespread feeling among these journalists that the CRTC's approach to radio news is a curious mixture of ignorance and thoughtlessness with occasional bursts of inept and perhaps dangerous interference in the news process.

Ignorance in this case appears to be the result of a failure by the CRTC to pay sufficient attention to electronic journalism amid the welter of contentious issues that it is required to confront. This failure is reflected in a lack of expertise about journalism among the staff at the CRTC. Although there have been commissioners in the past who have been drawn from the ranks of working journalists, it is rare to find an influential policy-formulating bureaucrat with this background within the CRTC or, for that matter, the federal Department of Communications. The result of this has been a rather cavalier approach to radio journalism characterized by a blanket requirement that all radio stations carry a certain amount of news and information programming.

Creative De-regulation

It is time to ask whether this crude approach really continues to benefit either broadcasters or radio journalists, not to mention the public. A small radio station that meets its regulatory obligation by hiring one or two low-paid and inexperienced journalists to read stories from the news wire, or by running syndicated newscasts, can hardly be said to be

informing the public in a distinctive and useful way. The time has come for the CRTC to carefully "de-regulate" in this area in a way that encourages private broadcasters to use their resources more creatively. This could be done, during a trial period that might last from three to five years, by encouraging private broadcasters, when their licenses come up for renewal, to suggest new ways in which they might provide news and information. Instead of broadcasting conventional but sub-standard newscasts on a regular schedule, for instance, a station might propose smaller amounts of more significant news programming, perhaps with a focus on certain types of community activity.

A change of this sort should not be considered by commercial broadcasters as an opportunity to evade their responsibilities, or to cut their news budgets. A change in a regulatory requirement for news and information programming should not be used to ease the financial difficulties currently being experienced by many small radio broadcasters. If some stations have become uneconomic under the current regulatory format because of changing market conditions and technology, it would be a mistake to indirectly subsidize them by placing them in a special category of stations that do not have to satisfy the usual obligations inherent in the use of public radio frequencies. This probably would not assist the stations in the long run, and would undermine the whole system of regulated broadcasting.

This kind of flexibility in the regulation of radio news will only be effective if it is applied carefully by the CRTC. In order to do this, there should be, within the staff of the CRTC, a small division that specializes in electronic news, both radio and television. It would be directed by an experienced journalist-administrator and its mission would be to inform the Commission of the implications for journalism of its regulatory decisions, and to promote higher standards of electronic journalism. Even a small section within the CRTC would be useful as an internal source of expertise and as a channel of communication between the CRTC and electronic journalists.

It would help to ensure that a more flexible approach to the regulation of radio news and information programming would be used productively by the industry.

The CRTC and News Content

It would also prevent the CRTC from blundering about in the area of news and current affairs as it sometimes has in the past. The CRTC's supervision of the content of news and current affairs programs has been a history of laissez-faire interspersed with examples of sporadic interference in the news process that have antagonized journalists and perhaps endangered freedom of the press. This occurs because the CRTC, in principle, is reluctant to interfere in the news process. When public complaints force it to take an interest in news and current affairs programming, it does so distastefully and often clumsily.

A recent example of this approach, cited for the Task Force by the Radio-Television News Directors' Association of Canada, was the CRTC's decision to set a minimum standard for Canadian content in the newscasts of CKLW and its FM affiliate in Windsor, Ontario. The RTNDA is correct in its contention that this type of regulation "is contrary to the principle of freedom of the press and infringes on the ability of journalists employed at these stations to exercise their professional judgment as to what constitutes 'news' at any particular time."[21]

Some news directors also have complained that CRTC discussion of the content of news and current affairs programs, usually in reaction to complaints from listeners, has sometimes been held in conjunction with license renewal hearings. This places extreme pressure on news directors to avoid controversial programming and to accept CRTC regulation of news content passively. Perhaps there should be a specialized forum within the CRTC for questions dealing with the content of news and current affairs programs. Such a format, by separating the license renewal process to some extent from the "accountability" process, at least as far as news is concerned, would provide for a more effective discussion of journalistic issues and would be of assistance to electronic journalists and to viewers and listeners who wish to complain about the content of news programs.

Accountability: Print and Electronic Journalism

Print journalists, particularly in this decade, have improved their systems of accountability significantly. Stimulated by the Royal Commission on Newspapers in 1980-81, newspapers have supported expanding activities of voluntary press councils. While there were only four such councils in operation in 1980, there are now press councils covering newspapers in every province, and membership has increased substantially. The Ontario Press Council, for example, now covers every daily newspaper in the province.

Only the Quebec Press Council, however, includes electronic journalism in its mandate. The newspaper-supported press councils in other provinces have shown little enthusiasm for expanding their activites into electronic journalism. At the same time, there are continuing signs of public frustration at the inability of viewers and listeners to bring effective complaints against electronic journalists. No electronic news organization, as far as I know, has followed the practice of some large Canadian newspapers in appointing ombudsmen to handle public complaints.

Because the CRTC is the only forum that exists for the accountability of electronic journalism, this agency should do everything within its power to fulfill this part of its mandate conscientiously and effectively by attempting to bring the public and electronic journalists together for constructive discussion of controversial programs and by making sure that their

regulatory efforts do not encourage the inclination of some broadcasters to avoid controversy by providing their audiences with the newscasting equivalent of "Muzak" - syndicated news material and bland local news that viewers and listeners can receive passively, digest easily, and forget instantly.

FOOTNOTES

PART IV

RADIO

1 Interview with Taylor Parnabee, Director, Editorial Services, CKO Incorporated, Toronto.

2 Broadcaster, February, 1985, p.28.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., p.29.

6 Canadian Association of Broadcasters, 1984 Analysis of Financial Statistical Data for all Private AM, FM and TV Stations, September, 1985.

7 Ibid.

8 "Radio Gains Clearing Away Recession Static," Globe and Mail, August 21, 1985.

9 TV and Radio: Figures That Count. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. August, 1985.

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11 Telephone interview with Michael Sullivan, Toronto office of the National Association of Broadcast and Technical Employees, by Kathryn Hazel.

12 Interview with Taylor Parnabee.

13 Enchin, Harvey. "AM Radio Losing Audiences to FM". Globe and Mail, November 13, 1985.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Interview with Brian Olsen, Director of Broadcasting Services, Telesat Canada, Ottawa.

17 Broadcast News information package, 1985.

18 "Coast-to-Coast Network", advertising brochure issued by Télémedia, Cancom and Broadcast News, 1985.

19 Cleary, Bernard, Michel Cormier et al. "La Presse Electronique au Québec", 1986.

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PART V

TELEVISION

Local News: The Battleground

Local television news is the current battleground in the continuing competition between public and private broadcasters in Canada. In this decade, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, its survival threatened by budget cuts and changing public and political attitudes, has identified news and current affairs programming on television as a critical area. This strategy of survival was applied first to network news and current affairs and then to local news, particularly the supper-hour news shows broadcast by the CBC in major markets where there are CBC-owned stations. Private broadcasters have responded with demands that CBC should restrict its role to supplying network news and leave local news to the growing number of private television stations.

The outcome of this debate will have a decisive effect on the size, structure and role of the CBC in the foreseeable future.

This battle for the television news audience can be seen historically as the latest phase of a CBC effort over the past 35 years to define its proper role as a supplier of television news, first in splendid isolation as the sole television broadcaster in Canada and later in competition with a growing number of private broadcasters.

The CBC began French and English television broadcasting in 1952. For almost 10 years, the CBC had an opportunity to establish itself in the minds of Canadians as the primary supplier of news and information programming. Not only were there no Canadian commercial stations to compete with in those days but, for once, American competition was not a problem. Not surprisingly, Canadians have always preferred to watch Canadian news programs on television. In fact, with the possible exception of certain kinds of sports programming, news is the only kind of Canadian television production that has been consistently preferred over the American product by the vast majority of the Canadian television audience.

By 1962, when most Canadians were only beginning to receive a second Canadian channel, CBC television news was in a strong position. A survey of television viewers in that year showed that significantly more people rated CBC news as "very good" than news of private stations. By a large margin, Canadians felt that the CBC was a more reliable news source than the private stations.[1]

In the 1970s, as private broadcasters increased in number and improved their news programs, this attitude changed. The CBC explained this to itself by saying that changes had occurred "not because CBC news was held in less regard but because opinion of the private stations had risen."[2]

According to CBC research, the change in opinion had occurred in the 1972-77 period. A 1977 survey that attempted to measure the "boredom factor" in network news showed that CTV News was judged to be more interesting than CBC English network news but that the results were opposite in Quebec where TVA news was judged to be more boring than CBC French news.

The New Network Format

In the early 1980s, in response to competition from private broadcasters and increasing difficulty in obtaining funds, the CBC devoted a greater share of its dwindling resources to a new format for network news and current affairs programming in prime time. "The National" was advanced from 11 p.m. to 10 p.m. to be followed by a new current affairs program called "The Journal." This innovative format and scheduling were immediately popular with viewers. The CBC's role as an important supplier of network television news was considerably reinforced.

Perhaps as a result of this success, the CBC turned its attention to local television news. An internal task force in 1984 recommended the abolition of a great deal of regional television programming in favour of strengthened local

supper-time news shows, greater integration of local news shows with network programming, and a more competitive system within the CBC to encourage regions to produce network-level programs rather than an assortment of low-rated regional programs.

Supper-hour News Programs: The "Heartbeat" of Local Programming

The "Devion Report," named after Ron Devion, Director of CBC Television in Vancouver and Chairman of the 1984 Task Force on Regional Programming, identified supper-hour news programs as "the heartbeat of regional programming." But it also found that these programs were "inconsistent and erratic in their approach...more interested in imitating their competition than in providing a clearly thought-out alternative...engaged in a great deal of uselessly redundant activity...and trailing the competition in all but three centres."

At the same time, the Devion Task Force identified the supper-hour programs as being, in combination, "a powerful national machine - spending $50 million a year, employing 300 journalists and attracting a national audience each day of 1.2 million."

"On a station-by-station basis," the Task Force stated, "that puts the supper-hours among the most popular shows CBC-TV presents: equal to or ahead of The National, The Journal, fifth estate and The Beachcombers.

"But across the country," it continued, "supper-hour programmers feel neither powerful nor successful. The problem is the competition. CBC journalists see the opposition with the latest equipment and plenty of it; anchored by friendly stars, and supported by expensive promotion. And most important, on a national basis - CBC-TV supper-hours are outdrawn for both ratings and for community response."

According to the Task Force, this was "a defeat we can't accept." It recommended a major effort by the CBC to compete more effectively for local news audiences, the resources to come from a reduction of other types of regional television programming. This meant not only that some local drama and variety programming would be sacrificed to local news but that, in some markets, the half-hour weekly public affairs shows that had traditionally been produced by local CBC stations would be scrapped and their resources folded into the supper-hour shows.

"The supper-hours must have a large audience," the Devion Task Force stated. "These are not elitist or specialized programs. But to go like for like in programming terms requires an immense resource increment (unlikely) or a weakening of journalistic standards (unthinkable). Even then, the result would likely be the American big city model: almost identical news shows locked in a continual and expensive battle for the lowest common denominator.

"That's not much of a benefit to audiences," the Task Force concluded. "Canadian journalism needs diversity as well as abundance."

Reforms and Audience Reaction

These recommendations were put into effect with a speed and efficiency that was, in comparison with the CBC's previous administrative record, dazzling. As a result, the total audience for the CBC supper-time news programs began to increase, with significant gains in some major markets.

Under financial restraints, in an increasingly hostile political environment, and in a period of relatively soft public support for public broadcasting, the state-owned network identified network and local news as central to its very existence. It appeared to believe that unless these areas were defended and even reinforced, the future of the CBC itself might be uncertain. Under assault, the CBC focussed more of its dwindling resources on news.

The early results of this strategy are evident in audience totals and in the internal workings of the CBC. There is no doubt that a majority of its local news programs have improved in terms of editorial quality and popular appeal.

BBM market surveys in the spring of 1985 in the 16 markets served by CBC early evening news show that the CBC's audience share since 1978 has increased in six cases, decreased in two, and remained about the same in eight.[3] Three of the six increases were in smaller markets - St. John's, Corner Brooke and Charlottetown. The other three were in Ottawa, where the low ratings of the CBC supper-hour program have been a perennial embarrassment to the CBC in the capital city; Regina, where the

CBC supper-hour program operating with new equipment out of a new building started to gain ground on a commercial station never before seriously challenged; and Calgary, where the spring 1985 ratings showed the CBC program in top position for the first time in a close three-way contest. Markets in which ratings for the CBC's supper-hour programs have remained more or less constant since 1978, despite many fluctuations, were Sydney-Glace Bay, Montreal (where CBMT has performed disastrously since 1978 in the supper-hour period against CFCF-TV), Windsor, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Edmonton and Vancouver. In Winnipeg, the CBC ranked ahead of two commercial stations, and in Edmonton, CBXT shared the lead with CITV in competition with third-place CFRN-TV, which had tended to dominate the market until 1983.

A comparison of spring 1985 ratings for CBC and CTV early evening news programs showed that the CBC had the top-rated programs in six locations (St. Johns, Corner Brooke, Charlottetown, Winnipeg, Calgary and Edmonton) while CTV stations were in the lead in nine markets, including the three largest (Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver).

This upward trend was the result of many changes made within CBC in recent years, particularly in the 18 months since the completion of the Devion Report.

New Equipment

One of the most important technological changes was the upgrading of equipment. In many cities, the CBC local news and

current affairs had continued to use film long after commercial stations had switched to videotape. Once the initial investment in equipment is made, videotape is cheaper and faster: videotape cameras are normally operated by a cameraman on his/her own while film cameras in the CBC also required the services of an audio technician, and videotape is available instantly after shooting for editing and transmission compared with periods of up to several hours required for film processing, depending on the location of film labs in relation to editing and transmission facilities.

The other important technological advance was the provision of a daily satellite feed in 1984 (CARS - Current Affairs Regional Service) to facilitate the exchange of program material between supper-hour shows, and between the supper-hour shows and network programs. This efficient use of the network had been discussed within the CBC for at least 20 years but was not implemented until 1985. CARS enabled the executive producers of supper-hour programs to use their resources more efficiently by broadcasting some items from other stations, by co-producing items with other supper-hour programs, by using such syndicated features as movie reviews without having to hire individual critics in each market, and by encouraging co-productions with such network programs as The Journal and Midday. The network benefitted by having access to a large pool of material from the regions for Midday, the noon-hour news and current affairs program launched in January, 1985. Without the regional network, Midday probably would not have been possible.

New Attitudes

Changes in personnel and attitudes within the corporation were even more important. Many of CBC's problems with local news programs had been identified years earlier, but it was only when the corporation found itself in a battle for survival that efforts were made to remove unproductive executive producers from positions of local authority. Assessments of performance became more rigorous, based on the Devion Report's thesis that these programs had to be popular as well as journalistically sound to be considered successful. Journalists throughout the CBC became aware that CBC planners in Ottawa had made local news a priority and that, instead of siphoning off talent for the network in the usual way, the CBC was taking money and some of its best personnel from the network and putting them to work in the regions. As one of the executives involved in this process put it, "these guys (in the regions) began to see themselves as the real network."[4]

The success of this effort seems already to be causing some concern among certain people in the CBC as local producers become more and more aware of ratings and competitive. Interviews with CBC producers in charge of local news shows across the country in late 1985 revealed a fairly common concern that the CBC's increased competitiveness could eventually create news programs more akin to some of those on the private stations. It was said over and over again by these producers that the CBC had to "remember its roots in current affairs programming" in order

to remain a distinctive service.

Response of the Private Sector

These changes have not gone unnoticed by commercial broadcasters. In many markets, the local news shows of commercial stations have received new equipment and higher budgets to enable them to compete more effectively with the CBC.

News directors of commercial television stations often tend privately to applaud the CBC's effort to improve local news programming because they believe in the virtues of competitive journalism and because they can use increased CBC competition to persuade station owners to give them more resources for their own news departments. But the owners, caught between an assault on their audiences and revenues and demands from their own news departments for more resources to meet this competition, are far from happy. The CBC's more aggressive approach to news, and the success of this policy in some markets, has lead many of them to publicly question the rationale for a strong CBC news role, particularly at the local level.

The Duplication Thesis

These broadcasters argue that CBC local news simply duplicates a service that is available from increasing number of private broadcasters. This position has gained strength in the past decade with an increase in the number of Canadian cities served by two commercial television stations and, in the case of Toronto, three.

This argument relies on the thesis that local news shows simply duplicate one another. This attitude was expressed in a recent interview by Moses Znaimer, President of CITY-TV, Toronto, when he said that "newspapers and radio are known to offer a nice range of choice...but television is not like that, it's all dead centre."

"You are either a notch to the left of dead centre and you're called the CBC or a smidgeon to the right of dead centre and you're called CTV or Global," explained Mr. Znaimer. "But really, they're the same and they're managed typically by people who work in a kind of revolving movement between them and all wear the same sort of suits."[5]

Mr. Znaimer saw the newscasts of CITY-TV as an exception to this rule. "We, at least, offer a difference," he claimed.

If every local television newscast offered the same information from the same perspective to the same audience, it would be true, as private broadcasters claim, that more than one local television newscast in a community would be redundant, and that there is no reason for public money to be used to finance a local television newscast if a private station already is providing this service. Justification for the CBC's continued broadcasting of local television news, and perhaps even for the provision of local television news by more than one private station in the same market, should rely on evidence that local newscasts are distinctive to some extent in at least three areas: content, audience, and program philosophy.

How Different?

This demonstration will not be conclusive in the sense that news programs obviously are not completely different from one another. They draw their program material from the same daily array of human activities. There is bound to be a great deal of duplication. It would be futile to try to determine the exact measure of difference that would justify the usefulness of more than one local newscast. Even to attempt to do this would run the risk of seeming ridiculous to viewers who expect their newscasts to be somewhat similar and to keep them informed about the same major events in the day's news. In the United States, for example, there are many similarities between the newscasts of the three major networks but this is never used as an argument for the abolition of any particular network.

Comparison of local television newscasts will be useful only if it is remembered, at the outset, that differences will be evident only "to a certain extent." Whether or not the difference is sufficient to warrant the continued existence of more than one local television newscast will be a matter of opinion.

It should also be remembered that our methods for measuring differences between television newscasts are rather primitive. No satisfactory method of measuring differences in the quality of television news, for example, have been devised and widely accepted. Comparison of newscasts still rely largely on measurements of time and identification of subject matter: which newscast has longer or shorter news items, for example, or which

newscast covers more international rather than local news? Care has to be taken in drawing conclusions from this kind of measurement.

Nevertheless, there is a great deal of accumulated evidence which suggests that there are differences between CBC and commercial newscasts, and between various commercial newscasts. Research done for the Task Force confirms these earlier findings.

Previous Studies

Some of the initial studies in this area compared, not surprisingly, the contents of television newscasts and newspapers. Some researchers concluded that there were more similarities between television newcasts than between the newscasts and newspapers. A study of television news editors in the United States about 15 years ago concluded that: "The editors were greatly alike in their selection of news stories, in their perceptions of audience and news stories, and in their reading habits and experience."[6]

Another American study published in 1974 found that 70 per cent of all news items covered on one U.S. television network was covered by at least one other network over a two-week period. On weekdays, 58 per cent of all items were duplicated by all three networks.[7]

The most recent study in the United States examined local television news overlap in three metropolitan areas over a

five-day period. In each city, approximately half of all local television news stories were duplicated. The author of this study concluded:

"The study found that each additional station in a market contributes substantially to the pool of diverse news content televised in a community. The larger broadcast markets covered a greater number of unique news stories and devoted more local news time to such stories than did the smaller market."[8]

These previous studies might lead a Canadian researcher to anticipate that exclusive or unduplicated news stories would represent from one-third to one-half of the content of both CBC and private local television news, and that an increase in the number of stations broadcasting local television news would increase by a significant amount the quantity of local news available to viewers.

Some of the most useful studies of television news content in Canada have been made by for for the CBC. A landmark content analysis of network television news in 1978 by Barry Kiefl, Senior Research Officer, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, examined similarities and differences between French and English, CBC and private newscasts.[9]

This study noted that all network television news programs had a great deal in common. They all emphasized immediate events. They all had a mixture of good and bad news "although the French networks have more good news than the English." They all tended to carry more foreign news on weekends, when many of their

staff journalists were on holiday. They all placed considerable emphasis on political news, with about three-fifths of all news involving government in a major role. Only a small percentage of television news, the study concluded, was "without some form of government agent." As a result, the majority of people interviewed on television newscasts were politicians.

But within these similiarities were there were some significant differences. Both CBC networks, English and French, tended to rely more on correspondents to deliver and interpret the news; private networks relied more on the anchorperson in the studio. CBC networks used more film of events than their private counterparts. The study also claimed that "CBC news generally treats news stories in more depth."

This analysis of French-language newscasts showed that "CBC French news far outstrips TVA news both in technical resources employed in presentation and geo-political breadth of coverage." On the other hand, TVA carried more intensive coverage of Quebec. CBC French news concentrated on government and politics while TVA reported on a wider variety of subjects. TVA news items also were considerably shorter, usually not more than a minute in length.

The 1978 CBC study found that "differences in audience reaction and in presentation and content are not so great in English television news." Almost half of the English-language newscasts dealt with the same events each day. CBC relied more on its own correspondents to report the news while CTV used its anchorperson more extensively.

Comparison between the French and English networks also showed that English networks tended to use shorter interviews and to edit their interviews more tightly.

Since the 1978 study, the CBC has compared the contents of a number of competing local television news programs.

In 1979, a content analysis of local news in Ottawa revealed that the CBC station, CBOT, provided "significantly more local area news" than CJOH, but this information had to be taken in the context of different coverage methods by the two stations. Many of the CJOH reports classified as national by the study were covered, in fact, by their own local reporters and given a local slant.

The study also stated that CJOH had more dialogue between anchorman and other personalities and that its news tended to have "a quicker, more constant pace." It was also found that CJOH used more news film during its news but that much of this was supplied by a U.S. network.

Both CBOT and CJOH devoted about one-fifth of their program time to commercials.[10]

A content analysis of local television newscasts in Vancouver in 1985 indicated that local CBC newscasts in that city were faster paced than local private newscasts. As the report stated, "CBUT newscasts contain equal numbers of brief reports and longer, in-depth reports, while BCTV uses a larger proportion of long, in-depth reports." This specific difference between CBC and private newscasts was somewhat peculiar, as we shall see, to

Vancouver, if the sampling was representative of station content. Only 15 newscasts from each station were selected.

About one-third of the stories carried on the two newscasts were duplicated. The lengths of time alotted to news, sports, weather, and continuity by the stations were very similar.[11]

A sample of Toronto local newcasts, taken at about the same time, produced some different findings. In this analysis of newcasts produced by CBLT (CBC), CFTO (CTV), CITY and CIII (Global), it was shown that "CBLT newcasts are the slowest paced of the four stations...they have the largest proportion of long, in-depth reports and the smallest proportion of short reports." CBLT devoted the greatest proportion of its time to regular newscasting while CFTO and CITY presented more features on business, medicine, entertainment, life styles, and other topics. CITY carried more local news than the other stations and, because its items tended to be short, it carried almost twice the number of local stories as CBLT.

It was also shown that CBLT varied the pace of its newcasts by alternating between short reports and longer items. CITY also provided this constant change of pace while Global and CFTO did not. The study concluded that "CFTO's program is the most highly structured and evenly paced of the four...it has the fewest interruptions of its regular news items by continuity, features, or ads."

It is evident from the studies that newscasts tend to differ from market to market, and that sometimes differences between local CBC newscasts in different markets can be more noticeable than differences between CBC and private newscasts in the same market. It is also evident that this type of sampling over a short period of time provides a very crude measure of differences between newscasts and that the results have to be assessed in combination with many other factors such as audience perception of program differences and journalistic practices within different news organizations.

The Task Force Study of Local News Content

Recognizing these limitations, the Task Force decided that it would be helpful to take a broader and more current look at the content of network and local television newscasts. The survey, undertaken by a team at the University of Windsor,[12] recorded and analyzed 73 English-language newscasts and 30 French-language newscasts during a "constructed week" of five days between October 15 and October 28, 1985. Newscasts of 21 television stations, 15 English and six French, were recorded in eight cities - Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa - Hull, Montreal, Quebec and Halifax. Ten of the stations were CBC owned and operated and seven were CTV affiliates. One English-language station was independent (CITY in Toronto). Three TVA affiliates were surveyed. In each city, the study covered CBC and one private station, either CTV or TVA. In Montreal and

Ottawa - Hull, English and French stations were studied. Only in Toronto were three English-language stations covered (CBLT, CFTO-TV and CITY-TV).

French and English network newscasts also were compared.

The study measured times devoted to various types of content (hard news stories, features or commercials), the place of origin of content (local or otherwise), the geographical focus of stories (local, provincial, national or international), the national focus of stories (Canadian, American, etc.), the subject areas covered, the issues covered in local and regional stories, the format of reports (whether reported entirely by the anchor or by anchor-reporter combinations), the length of items, the visual component of items (film or tape reports), and the gender of anchors and reporters.

While the study reported many local variations - there is no such thing, for example, as a rigid CBC or private station "format" for local news - some patterns did emerge that seemed to be characteristic of news programs in different systems. These characteristics were similar to those noted in earlier studies. It is significant, for this report, that the differences were more apparent in local news than network news.

Comparison of Network TV News

The comparison of prime-time English-language network newscasts on CBC and CTV, for example, showed that there were few discernible differences between network newscasts concerning: the

origin of content; primary geographical focus of news items; attention afforded to particular issues in degree of attention and in the rank ordering of issues; and the formats, generally, of the news presentations. CTV network, of course, included commercials while CBC network news carries no commercials. The CBC network tended to schedule more stories than did CTV of a hard, spot news character.

It is noteworthy that the CBC tended to schedule more stories that ran 30 seconds or less, but also more stories that were over two minutes in length. CTV tended to schedule more stories that were in the mid-range of one to two minutes.

This difference in the length of stories did not exist in the comparison of newscasts on the French-language television networks, Radio Canada and TVA. There were few discernible differences between these newscasts, at least in the categories included in the survey, except that Radio Canada tended to schedule a greater proportion of hard, spot news stories than did TVA, and that TVA scheduled more commercials than did Radio Canada.

Comparison of Local English-language TV News

At the local level, differences were more numerous and appeared to be more significant. The comparison of English-language CBC and private station local news revealed, in summary, the following variations:

- CBC news items were, on the average, longer than the news items presented by private local news stations. This could mean that they reflect, as the CBC would claim, more in-depth analysis of news.

- CBC news items were often presented by an anchor in the studio and a field reporter rather than by an anchor alone, as were many news items on private stations. This indicates that a greater proportion of CBC news stories contained reporting from the source, local or otherwise, rather than merely being read from material prepared by local reporters or news services.

- CBC news items were more often presented by female anchors than were private station news items.

- CBC news items originated less often in the broadcaster's own community than did news items on private stations, while CBC stations were more apt to present news items originating from a network source.

- CBC stations were more apt to use film/videotape in their news items while private stations were more apt to use still photos or graphics.

- CBC news items were more apt to report topics relating to: elections, education, social services, agriculture, concerts/plays, films, religion, human rights, environment, various human interest items, weather, while also paying greater attention to native Canadian and ethnic issues.

- CBC news items were less apt, than were private station news items, to report topics relating to: provincial government, a variety of cultural topics, a variety of legal topics, crime, health, fires and a variety of special topics.

Comparisons of Local French-language TV News

The comparison of local news on French-language CBC and private stations showed these differences:

- CBC news items were, on the average, longer than news items presented by private local stations.

- CBC news items were more often presented by an anchor in studio and a field reporter than were private station news items.

- CBC news items originated more often from local sources, while private stations more often utilized network and other sources.

- CBC stations programmed more hard news and feature news items than did private stations, while private stations programmed more commercials.

- CBC stations used a majority of female anchors, while private stations used a majority of male anchors.

- CBC stations focussed more on local community news items while private stations focussed more on national news and U.S./Canadian-American news.

- CBC news items were less apt to utilize film/videotape.

- CBC news items were more apt to report topics relating to: provincial government, local MLA, local development, concerts/plays, health, various human interest topics, and sports.

- CBC news items were less apt to report topics relating to: social services, unemployment, various cultural topics, trials, crime, and weather.

Comparison of Local TV News, English and French

If the statistics from all local newscasts are combined, they produce the following differences between CBC and private station newscasts, English and French:

- CBC news items were, on the average, longer than news items presented by private local newscasts.

- CBC stations were more apt to use network news items, while private stations were more apt to use locally originated news items.

- CBC stations covered more political news on a national to global level.

- CBC stations covered a wider variety of geographical global areas, while private stations focussed more on North American news.

- CBC news items were more apt to report topics relating to: elections, concerts/plays, human rights, various human interest topics, environment, weather and ethnic groups.

- CBC news items were less apt to report topics relating to: provincial government, various cultural topics, crime, and various other topics.

- CBC stations were more apt to use an anchor and field reporter combination in presenting news.

- CBC stations used a majority of female anchors, while private stations used a majority of male anchors.

- CBC and private stations both used males as reporters a majority of the time - in almost 80 per cent of all news items using field reporters.

Comparison of Toronto TV News

The Toronto section of the study merits special attention because it was the only one that included three local television stations - CBLT (CBC), CITY (private-independent), and CFTO (CTV). The fourth Toronto station, Global-TV, was not included in this study.

The findings seem to indicate that differences between newscasts tended to increase, if anything, as the number of statiaons increased, particularly if new stations entering the market have a clearly defined mandate or mission.

Some of the findings were unexpected. CBLT, for example, devoted more of its program time to commercials during the study period than did the others (51 per cent compared with 40 per cent on CITY and 38 per cent on CFTO). It was not surprising that CITY, which has a "younger" image than the other two stations,

carried more shorter stories (01 to 30 seconds), than CBLT or CFTO, but it also devoted a greater proportion of its time to the longest stories, running more than three minutes, than did the other two. If the stories were divided into categories of more or less than one minute in duration, however, CBLT produced more stories of longer duration (72 per cent of its total content) compared with 57 per cent for CFTO and 49 per cent for CITY. This seemed to indicate that CBLT followed the CBC's general inclination to use longer stories, as previously noted, but that the CITY newscast contained more changes of pace between very short and very long items.

Not surprisingly, CITY relied more heavily than the others upon local resources for its content (it lacks a Canadian network affiliation). During the study period, CITY's content was 93 per cent local while CFTO's was 72 per cent local in origin and only three per cent from CTV network, and CBLT news was 60 per cent local and 28 per cent from the network.

CITY used few female anchors but more female reporters on location than did the other two stations.

La Difference

While the findings of the Windsor study will be mulled over by academics and broadcasters for some time to come, it seems safe to say that it does confirm previous indications that differences do exist between newscasts, that they are more

apparent at the local rather than the network level, and that there are patterns running through systems that indicate characteristic differences between CBC and private newscasts, and between private newcasts when there are several in the same market.

The most apparent difference is the same one that has appeared in earlier studies: the CBC tends to run longer news items than do the private stations. There is an assumption that this confirms the CBC's common claim that it does more in-depth journalism on television, but a great deal more research into the visual and verbal content of newscasts would be required to prove this assumption beyond doubt. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, and taking into consideration the stated objectives of electronic journalists in the CBC and the private sector, the statistics that indicate more in-depth reporting on CBC television can probably justify a working hypothesis to this effect.

Comparison of Audiences for TV News

If there are differences between newscasts, they should also be evident at the receiving end of the process among audiences. Different newscasts presumably would attract different audiences. There is a great deal of evidence that this is what happens, although the Task Force did not have the time or resources to commission research in this specific area. In fact, much of the programming and market research conducted by private

broadcasters is based on the assumption that there is a relationship between the character of programs and the audiences they attract.

In 1982, CBC research did an intensive study of the television news audience in Toronto.[13]

The 1982 study was preceded by several years of surveying the Toronto news audience by telephone. These surveys had shown, in general, that "viewers primarily want hard news: whether it be international, national, local, weather, or sports, it's mainly news rather than backgrounding they are after in their newcasts."[14] They also showed that viewers of CBC news tended to be more interested in national and international news than were CTV viewers, although CBC viewers had a "substantial interest" in local news. They were less interested in sports than was the CTV news audience. Everybody was interested in the weather.

Despite the emphasis on hard news, the earlier surveys concluded that "there is a market out there for more intensive background analysis." Although audiences dropped substantially when the CBC switched from a straight news presentation in the first half of a news hour to a public affairs format in the second half, that still left "a substantial audience" for the second half.

The earlier studies demonstrated that personalities of anchors are important, but it was also clear that "strong personalities will not of themselves ensure a high audience."

There was evidence that lead-in programming can be a significant factor: ratings sometimes seemed to depend almost as much on popularity of programs preceding the news than on the content of the news itself.

The more comprehensive 1982 study was compiled from written questionnaires from 1,447 viewers. It showed that "CBC supper-hour news viewers show somewhat more interest in international and national news than do CTV viewers, with interest in local news about the same, and CBC viewers show slightly less interest in sports news than do CTV viewers."[15]

Although the viewers covered by this survey regarded television as their best method of keeping up with international and national news, and preferred newspapers for local and financial news, CBC viewers seemed to have a higher interest in reading and placed relatively less importance on television as a source of news. CBC news viewers also seemed to attach less importance to the personalities delivering the news on television than did viewers watching the private station newscasts.

The study confirmed the importance of lead-in programming. It also stated that "there is a general correlation between the size of the stations' early news audience and that of its prime time audiences - the larger the one audience is, then the larger the other tends to be."[16]

The 1982 study concluded that "typical CBC viewers," as portrayed by this study and earlier ones, tended to be "older,

more highly educated, and with a substantially higher interest in information programs, in international and national news, and generally in 'cultural' or 'demanding-type' programs than is the population at large." In Toronto, viewers of CITY-TV tended to be "younger, less well educated, and with a strong orientation toward local rather than national and international news."

The study indicated that both "independent" stations, Global and CITY, had "quite clearly defined audiences" with the CITY audience being young, less highly educated and more locally oriented, and the Global audience more nearly resembling CBLT's audience. CFTO news was seen, in this CBC study, as reflecting the characteristics of CTV programming in general with its large number of mass appeal shows from the U.S. and a relatively low proportion of "demanding" programs.

More recent national statistics confirm the distinctiveness of the CBC's television audience, both English and French.

In the age group two to seventeen years, audiences of CBC television and other Canadian stations are approximately the same. It is in the middle group, 18 - 49 years, that the other stations attract a larger proportion of viewers than the CBC does; in the over-50 age group, the CBC predominates, regardless of language.

The most significant difference between the educational backgrounds of the two audiences occur at the upper level, where the CBC has a clear edge among viewers who have completed university.

The CBC also attracts a larger audience among the manager/professional class (by a wider margin in French than in English) and among older viewers who have retired from the workforce.[17]

These statistics indicate that audience differences may be even more marked among French-speaking viewers than in the English community. Research into Quebec television news for the Task Force has clearly indicated that Radio-Canada is generally regarded as an "elitist" network while TVA has a more popular image.[18] As in English-speaking Canada, this has been reflected in newscasts as well as general programming.

News Philosophies

The third area of difference that one might expect to find between public and private broadcasters is in broadcasting philosophy as it is applied to news. This is perhaps the most significant area, as it plays a large factor in determining the content of news and the identity of newscasts in the minds of viewers, but it is the most difficult to define statistically.

There have been some studies of the characteristics of electronic journalists in public and private systems. These have indicated that CBC journalists, in comparison with their colleagues in the private sector, tend to be older, better paid, better educated, and more experienced. A study of French-speaking Montreal-area electronic journalists in 1974, for example, showed that 64 per cent of those working for public broadcasters had

university degrees compared with 32 per cent of those in the private sector.[19]

It was also significant that only about half of the private-sector journalists belonged to a professional association of journalists while three-quarters of those in the public sector were members of this type of group. Journalists working for private broadcasters tended to believe that their union should be concerned mainly with salary questions while those in the public sector believed that questions of professional status were more important. It was also shown that journalists working for private broadcasters tended to rely more on press releases while Radio-Canada journalists tended to seek out original news sources more actively.[20]

Another significant and related difference is that the CBC pays its journalists more than private broadcasters do, largely because journalists' unions play a larger role in the public sector. There are exceptions to this among some of the television anchors employed by large private networks and some of the larger local stations, but newsroom salaries as a rule are higher in the CBC than in private broadcasting, often by one-third or more. This means that in most markets the CBC is able to recruit journalists from among the best of those employed by private broadcasters. There is also a tendency for journalists in the private sector who regard themselves as being more thoughtful or analytical to gravitate toward the CBC under the impression that the public broadcaster will provide them with more time and scope

for in-depth journalism. This does not mean that every television journalist in the private sector yearns to work for the CBC - far from it - but the combination of salary differential and professional opportunity is a potent one for a certain type of television journalist.

Evidence of this was seen, in the research leading up to this report, in the complaints of many private news directors about CBC "raiding" of news personnel. This was a common theme among the private news directors who were among the more than 70 radio and television news directors and journalists, French and English, who were interviewed in every region of Canada in the preparation of this report. Private news directors complain constantly that the CBC "distorted" salary structures by paying journalists too well and by requiring less production, in terms of a number of stories produced per day or per week.

CBC news directors, or the executive producers of CBC news shows, also seem to be a somewhat different breed of journalist from their counterparts in private broadcasting. In general, senior CBC news executive tend to be journalists who have worked their way up within the Corporation. In the course of their careers, they have often moved around the country from one executive assignment to another. Private sector news directors often have worked for their network or station for a large part of their careers, sometimes surrounded by a nucleus of veteran journalists who have spent the majority of their careers with the same organization. This gives the private station a close

connection with the community but tends sometimes to restrict the professional development of its journalists. More significantly, news directors in the two systems talk about news differently, and are conscious of differences between the two.

"We have a different mandate," said the executive producer of one local CBC supper-hour program in a typical comment. "If they (private broadcasters) weren't making piles of dollars from the U.S. stuff, they wouldn't offer a local service. In the CBC, information comes first."

News directors for private broadcasters tend to compare the two systems in more pragmatic terms. As one stated, "we out-produce the CBC in terms of numbers, as well as in the quality of our items."

"The reality is," said another CBC news director, "that we know both private stations in this market do not provide an acceptable quality of news. We have better journalists. We give them better guidance and feedback. Their line-up is mushy. I have a hard time knowing where I am in their newscast. And we're the only ones who do any analysis."

"We carry as much information at six as they do, and in half the time," claimed a private news director.

"Our focus is more on entertainment, and we have better production values in our news program," said a private news director in western Canada. "Their (CBC) best newspeople are the ones they've taken away from us."

"We out-produce CBC in terms of the number of items," another private news director in western Canada claimed, "and our quality is up in the last six months."

"We are in the market place," stated another private news director. "You've got to have the product that people want. The CBC has no objectives. It's lost the handle to bureaucracy. Careers there are not enhanced because of quality performance."

News directors in the private sector are fiercely competitive, realizing that their news budgets depend to a great extent on the ratings of their programs. In many cases, they are also proud of the advances that they have made, in terms of audience share and program quality. Particularly in the larger markets, local newscasts on private stations have improved immeasurably over the years, and often compare favourably with network newscasts in terms of studio production and quality of news reports. But the news director in private television is always aware of the bottom line. Unlike newspaper publishers, who often enjoy the status and influence of their position, commercial broadcasters tend to be schizophrenic about their news operations, regarding them as a constant drain on financial resources as well as essential factors in attracting and retaining local audiences.

Within the CBC, on the other hand, the importance of news and current affairs programming has always been recognized as a major part of the Corporation's job, although money available for news and other forms of programming ebbs and flows as tidal

currents within the bureaucracy shift and as the CBC responds to changing external demands.

This three-part analysis demonstrates that there are differences between the television news programs provided by public and private broadcasters, their audiences, and their news philosophies. The extent of the difference can be debated, but it is sufficient to counter the argument that CBC news, particularly at the local level, merely duplicates what is being done, as well or better, by one or more private broadcasters in the same community.

News on Cable TV

Before discussing the reaction of private broadcasters to the CBC's more competitive approach to local news in the past few years, this might be the best place for a brief reference to an often ignored area of local news programming in the private sector. Community programming by most cable television systems now includes productions that can be classified as news and current affairs, although financial resources and production values may be modest. These include round-ups of local events, ethnic news, political reports by federal and provincial politicians, live coverage of municipal councils, election campaign appearances by candidates, religious programs, documentaries, and a great deal of local sports reporting and live coverage. Some of these programs are similar to those carried by the CBC and private stations in the early days of

television. Although they employ relatively few professional journalists, and are largely ignored by the CBC and private broadcasters, they now provide a significant amount of local and specialized news and current affairs programming on television. In local news, they have two characteristics not shared by the CBC and private newscasts: very small audiences, and no commercials. When private broadcasters talk about a new role for the CBC at the local level, it often sounds as if the cable television model is the one that they have in mind.

Selling the CBC News

In the past, private broadcasters also tended to ignore competition by local CBC television news because of relatively small audiences in most major markets and the absence of commercials. This easy co-existence has changed since the CBC started to accept commercials on local news shows (January 29, 1979) and, more recently, re-organized its local news operation in an effort to increase ratings. While the CBC has succeeded in implementing this plan, at least in the early stages, it has created at the same time a crisis of sorts for the public system. Unlike CBC radio news, CBC television news is a competitor for commercial television revenues. As it became more competitive for viewers and commercial revenues, it focussed more and more attention on the CBC's schizophrenic character.

Commercial broadcasters and their news directors now tend to regard the CBC not simply as a state-owned network but as a commercial competitor in the area of news. The more successful the CBC becomes in terms of audiences and commercial revenues, the more political opposition it creates among commercial broadcasters. It also runs the risk of subjecting itself to the same pressures that influence commercial broadcasters. Conceivably, this could make it more difficult for the CBC to fulfill its traditional mandate.

Commercial broadcasters at the same time have become more conscious of local news not only as an important producer of revenue for their operations but as an area of programming that will become more central in future. As the number of available channels continues to increase, and as VCRs offer Canadians a widening range of entertainment programming on demand, news and other forms of Canadian programming represent the only distinctive offerings that will enable Canadian stations to hold their audiences. Anything which draws local news audiences away from commercial broadcasters is now a more significant threat to their viability than it would have been in the past.

Response of Private Broadcasters

In some markets, the ability of local CBC television news to compete more effectively appeared to take private broadcasters by surprise. Years of dominance in local television news had lulled them into complacency. More recently, shifts in ratings

have galvanized them into a response that includes building new studio and editing facilities, new equipment purchases, salary increases for journalists, revised program schedules, and attempts to explore new networking possibilities while making existing networks perform more efficiently. News directors in private stations waver between resentment of the CBC's more competitive stance and recognition of its role as a catalyst in improving the resources available for television news coverage generally in their communities.

Innovations in some markets include starting the evening local news at 5:30 p.m. or even 5 p.m. in an attempt to attract local news viewers before the CBC supper-hour shows start at 6 p.m.

Global Television, for example, now begins its evening news at 5:30 p.m. and continues for 90 minutes in three 30-minute segments using different anchors.

ATV in Halifax, for many years the dominant force in local television news, now begins a 90-minute news package at 5 p.m. with a "soft" hour of news and features preceding its "hard" 30-minute newscast at 6 p.m. This program is broadcast by the Atlantic Satellite Network to cable systems in the three Maritime provinces where local news programs carried on some private stations have been replaced by inserts in the 90-minute network program originating in Halifax. By centralizing production in this way, ATV has been able to produce a more polished program and to differentiate its product from local CBC television news

which continues to be produced, as separate local news shows, in such Maritime centres as Halifax, Sydney, Charlottetown and Moncton (through an arrangement with a private station in New Brunswick).

The response of the private broadcasters has been motivated by a growing realization in recent years that local television news not only can produce important revenue but that it may be essential to the continuing prosperity of local television operations in the future because of its ability to give a station strong local identity and to influence ratings for prime-time programs that follow the news. At the same time, this response has been complicated by the owners' suspicion that the CRTC may be less aggressive about supervising commitments to news and current affairs broadcasting during a time when de-regulation is in fashion. As one executive producer in the private sector stated, "the industry is now testing the waters to see how far they can go."[21]

This conservative attitude perhaps has been more apparent at the network level in CTV than among some of its local affiliates. While the public television system gambled on a relatively innovative format for network news starting at 10 p.m. - a time tried and abandoned by Global TV in the 1970s but still used by several "independent" television stations in western Canada - CTV stayed basically with the same format at the same time (11 p.m.), apart from returning to a single-anchor program after the retirement of Harvey Kirck in 1984.

W5, CTV's weekly network public affairs program, has had difficulty not only in obtaining sufficient resources but in getting its programs on the air. At one point in 1985, largely because of scheduling of mini-series in prime-time by CTV, W5 programs were pre-empted from September 29 to December 1. This was later changed after internal negotiations, although W5 was forced to start at an earlier hour than usual to accommodate the mini-series. This recurring problem does little to persuade journalists at CTV that news and information programming is a priority of the network.

For many years, Canada AM on the CTV network has monopolized the national morning news slot and has become something of a national institution. In 1985, the CBC launched a morning news and current affairs television program in Toronto, perhaps as the prototype of a national program. This move was watched nervously by news executives at CTV who tend to believe that they have proprietarial rights to the morning slot and that a similar program on the CBC network would be "duplication." Partly because of this aspect of broadcasting "politics," and partly because its attention and resources have been occupied elsewhere, the CBC has given no indication that it intends to expand the Toronto morning show to the network, although, as a CBC news executive stated, with a trace of exaggeration, "once we have the show in Toronto, it would cost us about 55 cents more to put it on the network."

Competition by the CBC also has increased the efforts of private broadcasters to exchange news items by satellite both within CTV network, which collects and distributes news items among its affiliated stations daily, and within smaller groups. Independent Satellite News, a four-journalist service based in Ottawa, now supplies ATV and ASN, ATV's sister satellite service in Halifax, CITY-TV in Toronto, CHCH-TV in Hamilton, CFPL-TV in London, CITV in Edmonton, and CFAC-TV in Calgary with a daily feed of news.

Some of these stations also are among the four Canadian stations included in the eight-station television package carried by Cancom to cable systems in remote communities (CHAN-TV from Vancouver, CHCH-TV from Hamilton, CITV from Edmonton and CFTM-TVA from Montreal). Through informal agreement, at least some of these stations are using the Cancom system as a crude news network. For example, it is possible for CITV in Edmonton to record news items from CFTM in Montreal for use on their own newscasts, after replacing the original French-language narration with English script. If satellite facilities continue to become more accessible, because of more extensive ground facilities and lower rates, both CBC and CTV networks may face increasing competition as distributors of television news.

More Competition in Quebec

A similar situation may emerge in Quebec as the number of private stations increases. While the first English-language

third station in a Canadian market went on the air in 1974, when Global TV was launched, a similar development will occur in the French-language Montreal market only in 1986. Up to now, Radio-Canada has had to compete with only one private competitor in each market, and has been able to meet that competition more successfully, as far as news and information programming is concerned, than has the CBC's English-language television service.

Like the CBC and the rest of the country, Radio-Canada enjoyed a monopoly of television news and information programming for almost a decade after it went on the air in the early 1950s. Even after Télé-metropole started to broadcast in 1961, with a five-person news organization at the outset, it was many years before it became a significant competitor.

Despite competition from the new private station in Montreal and, since 1971, the private network system now known as TVA, Radio-Canada has continued to play a leading role in the information sector. A study in 1980 showed that 36 per cent of its television programming was made up of information programming compared with 22 per cent on TVA, the private network. In the same period, it was estimated that this Radio-Canada programming was reaching 32 per cent of the potential audience compared with 18 per cent for TVA's information programs. Although TVA programming in general attracts higher ratings than does Radio-Canada, Téléjournal of Radio-Canada continues to have a larger following than Nouvelles TVA.[22]

The importance of news is also reflected in the resources devoted to it by Radio-Canada. In 1983, it was estimated that Radio-Canada employed 57 journalists in its network television news headquarters in Montreal compared with a total 55 journalists in the central newsrooms of TVA, Télé-media and Radio-Mutual combined.[23]

Although local and regional television news is produced by Radio-Canada - for example, a regional public affairs program entitled "Contrechamp" produced by stations in Quebec, Rimouski, Matane and Sept-Iles - production in general tends to be more centralized than it is in the English-language network.

TVA Network, an association of five corporations owning 10 stations, dominated by Télé-metropole in Montreal, broadcasts a network news program nightly at 11 p.m. It also distributes public affairs programs originating in Montreal, Quebec and Ottawa.

Up to 1970, Télé-metropole remained a relatively primitive news operation with a staff of about 10 journalists using antiquated equipment. This started to change in the early 1970s when the network opened bureaus in Quebec and Ottawa and slowly expanded coverage of Quebec regions outside of Quebec and Montreal. Although this continues to be an area of some difficulty, because of the personnel and equipment employed by some of the smaller regional stations, TVA's network news has continued to improve in quality at an accelerating rate as the network, influenced by experience in the United States and other

parts of Canada, slowly recognized the key role of news in retaining audience and commercial revenues.

A more recent development in Quebec has been the emergence of Pathonic Communications Inc. as a major group with its purchase in 1984 of CFCM-TV in Quebec (City) from Jean Pouliot who is now the owner of the English-language commercial television station in Montreal, CFCF-TV, as well as the Quatre-Saisons group which has the license for the third French-language station. Pathonic Communications Inc. now owns stations in Quebec (City), Rimouski, Sherbrooke and Trois-Rivières.

Pathonic has been criticized for reducing political news coverage, paying little attention to regional coverage, and devoting much of its hour-long news program at 6 p.m. to items taken from U.S. sources.[24]

Because the development of private television and its news and information programming in Quebec has been on a smaller scale than in the rest of Canada, the debate about the proper roles of public and private television broadcasters in the area of news and current affairs has been less intensive. This can be expected to change as private broadcasters continue to upgrade their news operations and particularly when the new third French-language station in Montreal goes on the air. Its promise of performance places emphasis on local news, an area in which it will benefit from the experience and expertise of its English-language sister station, CFCF-TV.

This survey of the Quebec television news scene is sufficient to indicate that the debate about CBC's proper news role, particularly at the local level, is national in scope although its intensity may vary from region to region.

The "Uncontrolled" Competitor

The main contention of private television broadcasters is that the CBC, in the area of local television news and current affairs, is an "uncontrolled" competitor. They see the CBC as having access to tax dollars in order to compete against them in the commercial market-place. Their own financial resources depend on the ratings and revenues earned by their programs, including news. To them, the CBC's resources seem to be almost unlimited, despite the constant complaints of the CBC that it never has enough money.

Private broadcasters and their news directors consistently complain that their tax dollars flow across the street to their news rivals, where they finance higher salaries for journalists, modern equipment, superior network facilities, and expensive advertising and promotion campaigns. They regard this as unfair competition.

The CBC, of course, would reject this interpretation but it does reflect a growing inconsistency in the CBC's own position. As long as CBC news did not carry commercials, its claim to be a distinctive service was unassailable and, to a large extent, recognized by commercial broadcasters. This

equilibrium between public and private broadcasters still applies to CBC national news, to some extent, although commercials do appear in The Journal which shares the prime-time hour with the national news at 10 p.m. and an update shortly before the end of the hour. But the difference between the public and private newscasts starts to blur when the public system enters the market-place as a strong competitor for ratings and advertising revenues.

The CBC would argue that this change has been necessary in recent years because of budget cutbacks. Regardless of the justification, the fact is that local CBC news now competes with private broadcasters commercially as well as journalistically. This competition has become more pronounced in the past year or so, and it is said within the CBC at the moment that the effort to increase commercial revenue from local news programs will intensify in 1986.[25]

This issue is the most critical one in television news at the moment. Its resolution will shape, to an important extent, the structure of Canadian television broadcasting in the years to come.

The major policy options in response to this situation appear to be:

1. Accede to the wishes of the majority of commercial broadcasters and restrict the CBC's role to that of a provider of network news.

There are many precedents for this type of structure in other state-owned radio and television systems but, in Canada, it

would drastically alter the role of the state television system. It would significantly reduce competition in television news in communities where newspaper competition already has been drastically curtailed, largely as a result of competition from television.

The CBC also contends that its local television news operations are an integral part of its network programming, and could not be removed without severely affecting the network's ability to report Canadian affairs.

From a journalist's point of view, the elimination of CBC local television news would hold out the prospect of great loss for many communities, in terms of the information they require, with little compensating gain except to the revenues of private broadcasters. There is no assurance that all this additional revenue would be invested in improving news programs of private stations.

The other side of this proposal, of course, is the public demand that the CBC should not only continue to provide local television news but should extend this service to some communities where private broadcasters have used their monopoly position to provide an inferior product.

2. Prohibit the CBC from using its local news programs to earn commercial revenue.

This would place CBC television news in the same role, in relation to private broadcasters, as CBC radio news occupies. It would go a long way toward satisfying the demands of private

broadcasters but this could not be done without either increasing the revenue that the CBC receives from Parliament or substantially reducing its operations in news and perhaps other areas. Both results would encounter strong opposition, political and public.

3. Allow the current situation to continue unchanged.

The problem with this solution is that the situation is, in fact, changing fairly rapidly. The trend is toward greater "commercialization" of local CBC television news and this may have unforeseen and unfortunate results, for the CBC as well as for private broadcasters, unless its implications are clearly understood and policy guidelines are framed accordingly.

4. Attempt to establish some relationship between commercial revenues earned by CBC television news and the resources that are made available to the CBC for the production of television news.

At first glance the most radical option, this may turn out to be, on closer examination, the most promising and productive. If chosen as a desirable policy option, its implementation would have to be preceded by a careful examination of television news spending and revenues in both the private and public systems. This kind of detailed financial information was beyond the scope of this research project, partly because of a lack of time and resources and partly because of a reluctance by commercial broadcasters to supply meaningful breakdowns of news revenue and spending of a kind provided by newspapers to the Royal Commission on Newspapers under the authority wielded by that enquiry.

Information provided by the CBC in confidence to the Task Force, however, did indicate that important revenues now are generated by national and local newscasts in English and French, with revenues produced by all the English-language supper-hour programs in total being by far the most significant.

The executive producer of one such program in western Canada actually claimed that his show was now "paying its own way" in commercial earnings, although this was not substantiated by figures provided by the CBC's head office in Ottawa.

Without careful auditing of accounts, it is not possible to determine whether broadcasters, both public and private, are making a fair assignment of capital costs and operating expenses to news programs when they compare costs and revenues. So many facilities in a television station are shared by so many production departments that allocation of costs can often be arbitrary, depending on the effect that the calculations are designed to produce for a particular audience.

This also explains why the news director of a large Ontario television station could claim that his news programs were "making money" while figures later produced at a higher level in his organization showed a history of continual losses up to the present.

Despite the scarcity of meaningful financial information, it is clear that revenues from news programs on television have been increasing in recent years, following the general trend in the United States that has seen television news become a

generator of profits for American networks and some local stations. It is also evident that commercial revenues from television news have become more important to the CBC than anyone could have envisaged a few years ago, and that they are covering a significant portion of costs for local news programs. If the CBC succeeds in exploiting this source of revenue more effectively, it is possible that some of these programs could approach the point where commercial revenues might cover at least operating expenses by any reasonable calculation. This certainly would happen if more aggressive sales efforts were combined with a continuation of the recent trend toward larger audiences for the supper-hour programs.

Having embarked on this course by necessity, the CBC will have to live with its implications. Policies that treat CBC television news as if it were still entirely subsidized by the public are no longer realistic and can be justly regarded by private broadcasters as inappropriate and unfair.

The danger of this situation lies in the appearance, if not the reality, of a loss of independence and distinctive character by CBC television news. If executive producers of local CBC television news become even more conscious of battling for ratings and commercial revenues, they may tend to absorb the values and follow the practices of their opposite numbers in the private sector. If this occurred, it could undermine the special character of CBC news and alienate its special audience. It could then be asked, with some justification, whether there is a real

need for a news service on the public system, even if it doesn't cost the taxpayer any money.

In reality, however, it is not axiomatic that the carrying of commercials by CBC news produces a "commercial" approach to news - at least this has not been the experience of recent years. From the analysis of content done by this report, and recent audience surveys, it is evident that commercial revenue, at least up to the current level, has not eroded the distinctive motivation or character of CBC television news.

While certain types of regional CBC productions have been eliminated or reduced by the recent budget cuts, CBC news budgets have remained intact and may even have been increased in some cases. At the same time, television news departments have been told that they are a key factor in the CBC's survival and that they must become more productive in terms of output, popularity and commercial earnings. This was the closest that the CBC had ever come to subjecting its television news operation to "competitive" pressures somewhat similar to those faced by the news operations of private broadcasters. The effect of all this within CBC television news was undoubtedly positive. It allowed the CBC to make personnel and structural changes which probably would have been impossible under "normal" conditions. The result has been a new and healthy spirit of journalistic enterprise within CBC television news. "The National," "The Journal" and some supper-hour news programs have proved that the Devion Report was right when it said that television news programs could be "both important and enjoyed."

Anyone who has seen CBC television news programs in the past wallowing in protective isolation can only welcome the political and economic changes that have scared the CBC into improved performance in television news. The budget cuts probably have seriously damaged the CBC in other areas, and further cutbacks could start to affect news operations, but up to this point the stronger "competitive pressures" generated by the financial crisis within the CBC have produced a leaner, tougher, and more aggressive news operation. This is not an argument for further cuts in the CBC budget (it has to be remembered that CBC news budgets were largely protected from the recent cuts), but it does indicate that competitive pressure can produce positive results in the CBC's news departments as it usually does in news departments in the private sector, both print and electronic.

This would seem to indicate that a continuation of this pressure would be good for CBC television news. One way of doing this would be to relate the resources available to CBC television news programs to the commercial revenues that they earn. This would also have the merit of recognizing the real nature of CBC news today as a competitor within the commercial market-place.

If this were to be done, CBC television news would have to be treated for accounting purposes as a distinct entity within the corporation. A first step toward doing this would be an immediate effort by the CRTC to compile meaningful statistics for its own information on news costs and revenues for both public and private broadcasters. A subsidy formula could then be devised

which would recognize the special mandate and nature of CBC television news. In other words, the news would not be expected to become a centre of profits within the CBC but its resources would be related in some fashion to its ratings and commercial revenues. This would also have the benefit of rewarding merit and efficiency within CBC television news while penalizing incompetence and wastefulness.

Responding to this proposal informally, CBC officials have argued that splitting television news away from the organization might expose it to political control. While European precedent for this can be cited, particularly in France, in Canada it is our national tradition and the professional values of our journalists that protect CBC journalists and those in the private sector from direct political interference. This environment would not change because of a re-structuring of the CBC. In fact, a more identifiable and separate CBC news operation might conceivably be more difficult to discreetly influence without causing a political row.

In summary, then, the notion of considering the resources available to the CBC for news production in relation to its commercial revenue for news seems to provide the prospect of maintaining a system that is fair to commercial broadcasters while providing the CBC with the kind of stimulating, competitive climate that has produced such encouraging results in recent years. A policy recommendation along these lines seems at the moment to be the most pragmatic, under present conditions, and

the one that might serve not only the interests of the CBC but of television journalism in general most effectively.

Although these questions are not as critical in Quebec, because of the different structure of television broadcasting there, they are becoming more urgent with the prospect of an increase in the number of commercial television broadcasters. Any formula that related CBC television news revenues to resources available for the production of news has to be national in scope, and would have to take into account the special obligations of CBC French-language television news across the country.

FOOTNOTES

PART V

TELEVISION

1 Happy Medium. A Content Analysis of Network Television News. Canadian Broadcaasting Corporation, 1978.

2 Ibid.

3 Audience Report. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Spring, 1985. Percentage of population watching per quarter hour.

4 Interview with Peter Desbarats.

5 Media Magazine, May, 1985, p.10.

6 Literature Review. Analysis of Local TV Newsbroadcasts. University of Windsor, January, 1986.

7 Ibid.

8 Atwater, Tony. "Product Differentiation in Local TV News". Journalism Quarterly, 61:4 (Winter, 1984), pp. 757-762.

9 Happy Medium.

10 A content comparison of local TV news: CBOT-CJOH in Ottawa - Hull. CBC Research. July, 1979.

11 The CBUT-BCTV Vancouver Evening News Choice. A Content Analysis of Two Local Television Newscasts in Spring 1985. CBC Research. September, 1985.

12 Walter Romanow, Stuart H. Surlin, and Walter C. Soderland, "Analysis of Local TV News Broadcasts." Study prepared for the Task Force on Broadcasting Policy, Ottawa, 1986.

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14 Supper-Hour Television, p.2.

15 Supper-Hour Television, p.i

16 Supper-Hour Television, p.iv.

17 TV and Radio: Figures That Count. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, August, 1985.

18 Cleary, Bernard, Michel Cormier et al. "La Press Electronique au Québec", 1986, p.5.

19 Cleary et al, p.76.

20 Ibid.

21 Interview with Peter Desbarats.

22 Cleary et al, p.6.

23 Cleary et al, p.7.

24 Cleary et al, p.13.

25 Interview with Peter Desbarats.

PART VI

OTHER ISSUES

Although the role of television news in the future development of public and private broadcasting systems in Canada is the most critical issue before the Task Force, in the area of electronic journalism, there are a number of other important issues which might fall within its mandate.

1. Satellite Services

As indicated earlier in this report, technological developments have suddenly brought satellite communication within reach of most Canadian radio broadcasters. Within a year and a half, the impact of this has been striking, although it is too early to tell whether the long-term effects will be good for radio journalism, particularly at the local level.

In television, neither the technology nor the costs of satellite transmission have altered substantially in recent years. Across the country, virtually every private broadcaster and news director complains about the cost of using Canadian satellites. They draw attention to the fact that Canada has been a pioneer in satellite communications but that this has failed to benefit Canadian broadcasters and electronic journalists as fully as it might have.

The main complaint by commercial broadcasters is that Telesat, the corporation that controls all satellite communications in Canada and whose ownership is shared by the Canadian government and telecommunications companies, will lease nothing less than a 30-minute block of time to a television news operation at a cost ranging from about $300 to more than $700 depending on the time of transmission. On many occasions, for news reporting, a 10-minute block of time would be sufficient.

Telesat argues that the costs of setting up the transmission are almost the same for longer or shorter communications, and that a 10-minute block might not be substantially cheaper than a 30-minute block.

This argument seems valid, and there is little hope of a substantial reduction in rates, as long as Telesat considers the transmission of news as being no different from the transmission of television entertainment programs, sports events, or commercial transmissions of various kinds. This is where the problem lies.

Historically, news has always been considered in Canada to be a special kind of commodity when it is moved by carriers of various kinds. The postal service, for example, has usually recognized this in the form of special rates for newspapers and magazines. Right up to the end of their usefulness as carriers of news, telegraph services provided special day and night press rates which were much cheaper than normal commercial rates. For some reason or other, the same principle has never been applied

to television news and satellite communications. In view of the historical precedent, the onus should be on Telesat to explain why it should not be applied.

It could be argued that television broadcasting, at least for the larger enterprises, is among the more profitable business activities, in Canada, and that this kind of subsidy is unnecessary, although this argument was never applied to newspapers, many of which also were highly profitable. The fact is that the current high costs do discourage the use of satellites to transmit television news from one region to another, and to central television studios from other points in local coverage areas. If rates were lowered, there is no guarantee that the money saved by broadcasters would be invested in total in better news coverage but even if it were not, such a decision would encourage the use of Canadian satellites for television news to some degree.

As Telesat revenues increase, from other sources, the argument for the satellite-age equivalent of the old telegraphic daily press rate grows stronger. In a special brief to the Task Force on this subject, the news departments of the Atlantic Television System and Atlantic Satellite Network stated that Telesat officials "continue to assure us the matter is under consideration, and 10 to 15 minute transmission times will likely be a part of a new tariff scheduled to be filed with the CRTC at some time in the future."[1]

"However it should be noted," the brief continued, "that this assurance has been coming from Telesat for several years, and to date there has been no action."

The ATV-ASN brief also stated that "another factor that has contributed to higher costs of news coverage from distant points has been the regulatory provisions preventing Canadian stations from purchasing their own satellite uplink facilities."

"Although provisions appear to be in place to change this situation in April of 1986," the brief stated, "the reluctance of Telesat and the regulatory agencies to permit ownership prior to this has left Canadian stations and networks appearing, in the minds of their audiences, as less aggressive than the local American news programming that is delivered to the majority of Canadian homes via cable systems."

In view of these complaints, it would seem appropriate for the CRTC to take a special interest in transmission of news by satellite, and to seriously consider arguments for encouraging carriers to treat news as a special commodity, as they have in the past with older technologies. The minor restructuring of CRTC staff to reflect a special interest in electronic journalism, as suggested earlier in this report, would encourage this development.

2. Documentaries

"In some forms of information programming," said the CBC executive, "we are the best."

He was referring to the making of documentaries, a Canadian specialty in the days of the National Film Board long before television was a reality. Even in the early days of television, before it became such a powerful news medium, documentaries on film were produced for Canadian networks as a matter of course.

As news has assumed a large role in television, the longer documentary has had a difficult time maintaining an independent place in the television schedule. Most of the documentary production now seen on television is in shorter form and is contained within news and current affairs programs. There are still some notable exceptions to this, such as the documentaries of Donald Brittain and Cam Graham, but these men already belong to an older tradition in Canadian television. As in the past, the CBC, both English and French networks, produces a majority of the major documentaries. Many of them now are co-productions by the CBC in association with the National Film Board and the private sector.

The most important recent change in funding of documentaries occurred on April 1, 1985, when the Canadian Film Development Corporation (Telefilm) was authorized to invest in documentaries as well as other types of television programming. By the end of the year, French-language documentary projects accepted under negotiation at Telefilm had budgets totalling $6.5 million. English-language projects totalling $6.3 million had been accepted or were being negotiated. However, it was also

estimated unofficially by Telefilm that Canadians had produced an estimated 600 independent documentaries in 1984 without government assistance of any kind.[2]

Although Telefilm provides useful financial support in some cases, proposals are accepted by Telefilm only if they are accompanied by broadcaster participation. This does nothing to improve the editorial climate within which documentary producers work. The veto over showing of the documentary still remains with the broadcaster.

The problem with documentary production at this time is not primarily financial but one of distribution. The creation of an additional national television service to be distributed via satellite to cable systems, as suggested by the CBC, would be a major step in encouraging the production of more longer documentaries. It is too early to tell how effective the subsidization of documentaries through Telefilm will be in the long run. In the early stages, the funds being invested by Telefilm in documentary co-productions seem to be adequate.

3. International Coverage

Much of the television coverage of international events seen by Canadian viewers, particularly on private stations, comes from American networks. Even the CBC, with the most extensive network of foreign correspondents, relies on American sources for much of its foreign coverage. This has at least two unfortunate effects.

The most obvious is that the Canadian view of the world, as portrayed on the medium regarded by most Canadians as the most important for international news, becomes a minor variation of an American perspective. A less apparent problem within the industry is that Canadian networks spend significant amounts of money bidding against one another for exclusive rights to foreign material - money that might otherwise be used to improve their own domestic and foreign coverage.

It would be healthier if Canadian networks competed more vigorously in coverage of Canadian news and co-operated in the acquisition of foreign material. This may be unrealistic in a world of competitive public and private television systems but it might be useful to at least explore the possibility of collaboration in this area.

Another idea worth studying is the subsidization of foreign news bureaus by a public agency of some sort. This proposal was made in relation to newspapers by the Royal Commission on Newspapers and was rejected by publishers who feared that state subsidization could lead to state control. Because the provision of television news is a function of public as well as private broadcasters in Canada, and because broadcasting always has been a regulated industry, broadcasters might find public subsidization of foreign television news bureaus acceptable. Subsidization of technical facilities for producing and transmitting news reports might be explored, particularly if these facilities were located in major foreign

centres and designed to be shared by correspondents for both public and private broadcasters.

4. Product Development

The Royal Commission on Newspapers also suggested using the tax system to encourage newspapers to invest more in editorial content. This system would have provided tax concessions to newspapers that invested, in any given year, a larger proportion of their revenue in editorial content than the national average. In other words, average investment in editorial content as a proportion of revenue for all Canadian newspapers would be calculated every year, and newspapers that came in above the average would be rewarded while those who spent less than average on editorial content would be penalized through the tax system. This also was condemned by newspaper publishers as a scheme of state subsidization of print media which would open the door to political interference. For the same reasons cited above, broadcasters might be more willing to consider such a scheme. However, in view of the profits earned by most major broadcasters, it might be difficult to persuade taxpayers and the government that this type of subsidy is necessary.

5. All-News Channel

The only 24-hour, all-news channel available to Canadian pay-TV subscribers now is CNN (Cable Network News) from the United States. While the history of news broadcasting in Canada indicates that this is unlikely to be a serious competitor for news audiences in Canada, the presence of CNN on Canadian cable

systems, without a Canadian counterpart, is an anomaly in a nation with such a strong tradition in electronic news, and with a sufficient number of talented electronic journalists to staff not only its own domestic services but many of the foreign bureaus and anchor desks of American networks and local stations. In its brief to the Task Force,[3] the CBC has suggested that the creation of a Canadian all-news channel might be a joint enterprise by public and private broadcasters. This kind of initiative should be encouraged by the government.

6. Expansion of local CBC television news

Local CBC television newscasts are produced, with one exception in New Brunswick, only in cities where there is a CBC-owned and operated station. In an increasing number of these cities, there are now one, two or even three (in the case of Toronto) private broadcasters producing local television news. But in many smaller communities, local television news is provided only by one private broadcaster whose product is often inadequate, the result of limited commercial revenues and an even more limited conception of the obligations of local broadcasters. If CBC television news is a distinctive product, and if a diversity of television newscasts best serves the public, many Canadians in these smaller communities are receiving less than they deserve in the way of local television news while paying the same taxes to support the CBC as do the city-dwellers. In an ideal world, more Canadians would have access to local CBC newscasts originating in their own

communities; in the real world of budget restraints, and threats to existing CBC services, this hardly seems a realistic objective. It will have to be filed away for future reference, perhaps for a day when technology provides cheaper methods of reporting local news on television.

7. New Technologies

Teletext, the technology that permits transmission of print data with the television signal, to be decoded and displayed on home television screens, promises to overcome one of the chief defects of television news: lack of information. With official encouragement, teletext systems have grown rapidly in the United Kingdom, on both public and private television systems. American networks are experimenting actively with teletext and it is likely that the first teletext services that Canadians will be able to access regularly will be on U.S. stations. One of the first CBC services to fall victim to the budget cuts was "Project Iris," a pilot teletext news and information service originating in Toronto and Montreal. It should be one of the first to be restored.

FOOTNOTES

PART VI

OTHER ISSUES

1 Brief submitted directly to Peter Desbarats, December, 1985 (unpaginated).

2 Interview with Peter Pearson, Telefilm Canada, Montreal.

3 Let's Do It! A Vision of Canadian Broadcasting. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, December, 1985, p.34.

PART VII

QUEBEC PERSPECTIVE

As noted already, this report has utilized information from a separate report, "La Presse Electronique au Québec," prepared for the Task Force by Bernard Cleary and Michel Cormier with the colloboration of Roger de la Garde, all of Laval University, Quebec. For those unable to consult the Cleary-Cormier report for a comprehensive survey of electronic news media in Quebec, the following is a listing of its main sections and some of the highlights and recommendations of the report:

Chapter One contains descriptions and assessments of the principle ownership groups and networks in Quebec: Radio-Canada, TVA, Télé-Metropole, the Pathonic Group, the Cogéco Group, and Télémedia and Radio-Mutuel radio networks, as well as a description of broadcast news and the Electronic News Group.

Chapter Two compares the news and information policies of Radio-Canada and TVA. It describes the special role that Radio-Canada played in fostering social and political change in Quebec in recent decades, and some of the special problems that this has created for Radio-Canada's news services and the Quebec

journalists employed by them. It is stated that both Radio-Canada and the commercial TVA network produce the vast majority of their news and public affairs programs in Montreal and that this centralization of news production makes it difficult for the networks to accurately reflect the activities and concerns of French-speaking regions outside of Montreal.

Chapter Three compares the news and public affairs programming of Radio-Canada and TVA.

Chapter Four analyses the character of television news broadcast by Radio-Canada and TVA, particularly in terms of geographic coverage, focus on Quebec events, and the treatment of international news on these Quebec-based networks.

Chapter Five, "Portrait des artisans," describes electronic journalists working in Quebec. Recent surveys are cited to indicate that the electronic journalists are younger than print journalists and less inclined to be members of trade unions. A 1974 survey is cited to indicate that electronic journalists working for Radio-Canada have more formal education than those working for private stations.

A number of critics are quoted in a discussion of the "elitist" character of Radio-Canada has opposed to the more "popular" character of commercial broadcasters and their product. There is a discussion of an academic critique of Radio-Canada as "an agent of federalism" in relation to the TVA network as "an agent of American cultural imperialism."

In a sub-section on journalists and their employers, the report is critical of a lack of direction and training in many radio and television news departments, particularly in the private sector. This has been particularly apparent as young, ill-prepared journalists have encountered a growing number of communications experts employed by government and industry. The report warns that these weaknesses have created many problems in an era when sound reporting based on careful observation of facts has often been replaced by facile opinion journalism.

Chapter Six is devoted to a discussion of the Canadian Radio Television and Telecommunications Commission. It is stated that the CRTC has lost credibility and authority because it has abandoned its "watchdog" role. Public hearings of the CRTC have become "a mere formality."

The report notes an absence of journalists and information experts in the ranks of the Commission as well as in its staff. It is suggested that this makes the CRTC hesitant and perhaps unable to pay proper attention to radio and television news and information. It suggests that there might be co-operation in this area between the CRTC and the Quebec Press Council, the only press council in Canada that includes television news in its mandate.

It is suggested that the CRTC should pay more attention to quality rather than quantity of programs.

Chapter Seven opens with the warning that audience fragmentation because of cable distribution and other new technologies may erode audiences and revenues for Quebec television stations, and that this could have a negative effect on their ability to finance quality news and public affairs programming.

The report is critical of a failure of television broadcasters to utilize satellite technology because transmission costs are high in relation to the revenues of some Quebec stations, particularly in outlying regions. It suggests that there is a role for federal assistance in encouraging the distribution of electronic news by satellite and microwave.

The report proposes that the CRTC should prepare a comprehensive news and information policy or philosophy to guide it in the coming years. Such a policy would serve as a "touchstone" for the Commission itself, in assessing the performance of broadcasters in the area of news and information, and as a reference point for the electronic press as a whole, both owners and journalists. It would clearly set out the "rules of the game."

It proposes that the CRTC should be more diligent in obtaining information about news and information budgets, and in encouraging owners of media enterprises to fund their news and information operations adequately.

The formulation of such a comprehensive information policy would enable the CRTC to regulate destructive counter-programming by broadcasters using light entertainment programs in an attempt to draw audiences away from news programs on competitive stations. The possibility of setting fixed times for news broadcasts across the entire system should be studied.

Such an information policy also would help the CRTC to promote "multi-directional" news networks to exchange news and information between regions rather than simply broadcasting news from a metropolitan centre to outlying regions. It would also encourage the coverage of international events from a Quebec perspective. In this area, the CRTC could use a comprehensive information policy to encourage rival broadcasters and networks to pool their resources to provide more effective international coverage.

Finally, the report states that its research has confirmed the leadership role of Radio-Canada in the field of electronic journalism in Quebec. Radio-Canada has remained the reference point by which the performance of commercial broadcasters is measured.

For this reason, the absence of Radio-Canada from certain outlying regions of Quebec handicaps the development of these areas. There are no Radio-Canada newsrooms or journalistic teams based in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, in l'Estrie, or in the Mauricie and Abitibi regions. These areas receive Radio-Canada newscasts through private affiliates but efforts should be made to provide them with original coverage by Radio-Canada journalists.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Report on radio and television news for the
Task Force on Broadcasting Policy

by Peter Desbarats, Dean
Graduate School of Journalism
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The report contains a brief history of radio and television news in Canada, and a description of current ownership and network groups. This attempts to show that electronic journalism has largely been overlooked by previous government inquiries into broadcasting and culture, and that the Task Force has an opportunity to recognize its critical role in the current debate about the future of Canadian broadcasting. The policy suggestions are grouped under three headings:

RADIO

- The CRTC should carefully monitor the ongoing shift from AM to FM radio in order to ensure that this change in technology doesn't adversely affect current radio news operations. (The principal news stations in most communities are on AM.)

- The CRTC should monitor the rapidly increasing use of satellite technology for radio news distribution in the light of its possible adverse effect on local radio news operations.

- The CRTC should experiment with "creative de-regulation" for a trial period by asking radio stations, particularly those with small news operations, to suggest improved ways of providing local information programming to their audiences. There could be some flexibility in time requirements for local news if improved quality was the objective.

- The CRTC should recognize the importance of electronic journalism by creating a special news and current affairs division and appointing an experienced journalist-administrator to head it.

- In the absence of more effective self-regulation by the industry, the CRTC should develop a proper accountability process for electronic journalism and separate it as much as possible from the licence renewal process.

TELEVISION

- The principal suggestion for television news is that the role of local CBC TV news as a competitor in the marketplace for ratings and commercial revenues be recognized by relating the resources available to local CBC TV news operations, in part, to the commercial revenues that they generate. Some subsidy would still be necessary in recognition of the CBC's special mandate. This would encourage efficiency and competitiveness in local CBC

TV news. The first step toward such a system would be a detailed study by the CRTC of news revenues and expenses of public and private broadcasters. Research for the Task Force indicates that television news is becoming a profitable activity for many private broadcasters, and an increasingly important generator of commercial revenue for the CBC.

OTHER ISSUES

- The time-honored practice of providing special rates for newspapers and news reports carried by postal and telegraph services should be applied to news transmitted by Canadian communications satellites. The practice of treating news as an ordinary commercial commodity on Canada's satellite monopoly has prevented Canadian broadcasters from taking advantage of Canadian expertise in this field.

- The creation of additional national television services to be distributed via satellite, as suggested by the CBC, would be a major step in encouraging the production of more Canadian documentaries for television. At the moment, distribution, not funding, is the main problem.

- Canadians require more international news coverage by Canadian television journalists. Public and private networks should co-operate in this area. Government subsidization of some technical facilities should be explored.

- The use of the tax system to encourage broadcasters to invest more in news coverage should be explored. The objections of newspaper publishers to this kind of proposal (as outlined by the Royal Commission on Newspapers in 1981) might not hold true for broadcasters.

- A Canadian all-news channel should be established as soon as possible, by a consortium of public and private broadcasters if this seems to be the most efficient way.

- Expansion of local CBC television news to smaller communities now served by only one private television station should be a long-range objective for the CBC, when improved funding and new technologies make this more feasible than it appears to be at present.

- Restoration of the CBC's pilot teletext service, one of the first victims of budget cuts, should be one of the first services to be restored because of its potential to improve the quantity and quality of information provided by television.